

HACKING QUAKE: Adding Maps & Monsters

A PARENTS' GUIDE
TO KIDS' SOFTWARE

Computer Player

IBM PC
MAC
CD-ROM
ONLINE

48135

June 1996

STRATEGIES
REVIEWS
CHEATS
PREVIEWS
NEWS

Mega Strategies

- DESCENT II
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GETTYSBURG

Sirtech's
Nemesis
Rips into adventure

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- Normality
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— Strategy Plus

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Computer Player

JUNE 1996
VOLUME 3, NUMBER 1

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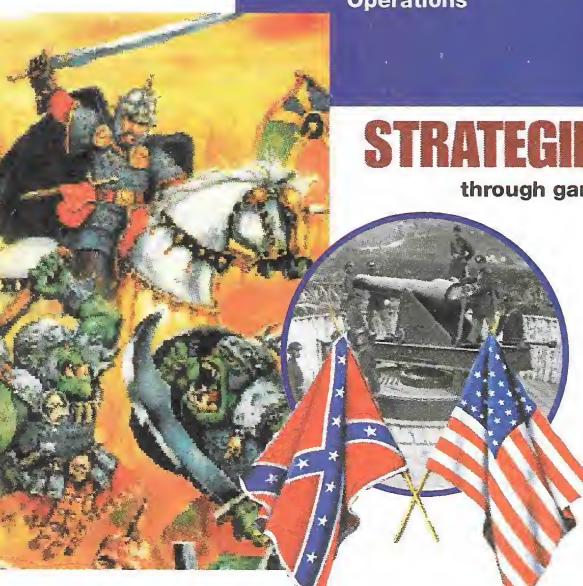
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MAGIC

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*PC Gamer

editor's bytes

This month, I'm writing from London, England. Contrary to what many of you might think, I'm not here sampling the latest in British bitters (though I've had the opportunity), but I'm attending the spring European Computer Trade Show—Europe's premier computer and video-game trade show. It's usually a good place to check out the latest in

new games from software developers, and you get to see them a *month before* the Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles.

The Latest from the Front

The show introduced a few surprises, including the official unveiling of Id's *Quake*—probably the year's most eagerly anticipated game. And as you might have suspected, it wasn't a disappointment. Getting a glimpse of the game at the GT Interactive booth was nearly impossible because of the dense crowd of enthusiasts who surrounded it. Id had set up a group of computers to run *Quake* in multiplayer mode and, as I had thought it would be, it's a multiplayer gamer's paradise—designed specifically for multiplaying. Jay Wilbur—Id's "biz guy"—hinted that we can at last expect to see *Quake*—probably early this summer.

On the first evening of the show, our friends at SCI invited us to attend the ECTS awards ceremony. Surprisingly, the game that won the most awards there hadn't even made it onto the top 10 list in the United States. Ocean's *Worms* walked away with no less than three awards. Several American-born games were also recognized: Westwood's *Command & Conquer*—Computer Game of the Year; and LucasArts' *Full Throttle*—Scandinavian Game of the Year. Both awards went to Virgin, because they distribute them in Europe. I found it odd that American game publishers neither received any awards directly nor were properly credited for their game creations. Can you say "jealousy"?

Obviously absent from the show were the multitude of console-based games we usually find at electronic games trade shows. About 90 percent of the games were for PC-based systems, and the few console games on display were for the Sony PlayStation and the Sega Saturn. We can confidently say that the console 16-bit market is as dead as Commodore computers. The panic caused by the collapse of the 16-bit market has our software friends in the land of the rising sun developing wares for the PC market in hopes of surviving.

Well, it's time to go. And I've promised to sample some of those aforementioned bitters with some developer colleagues. Until next time.

—Mike Davila
Editor-in-Chief

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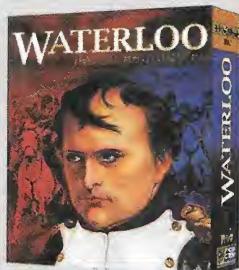
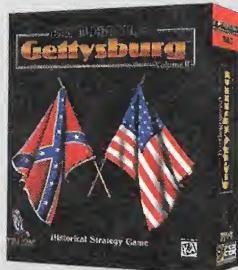
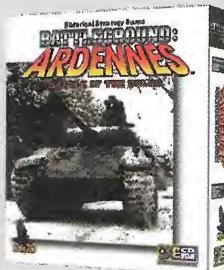
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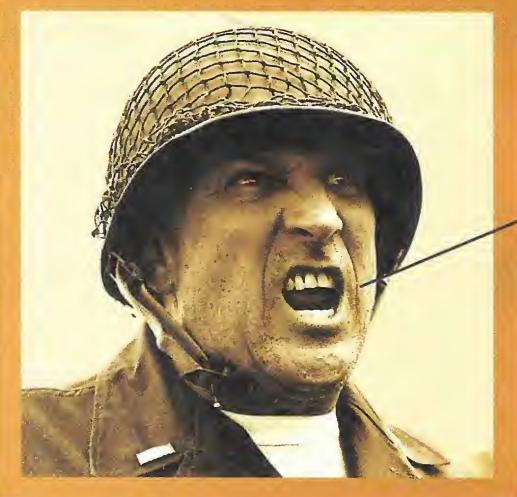
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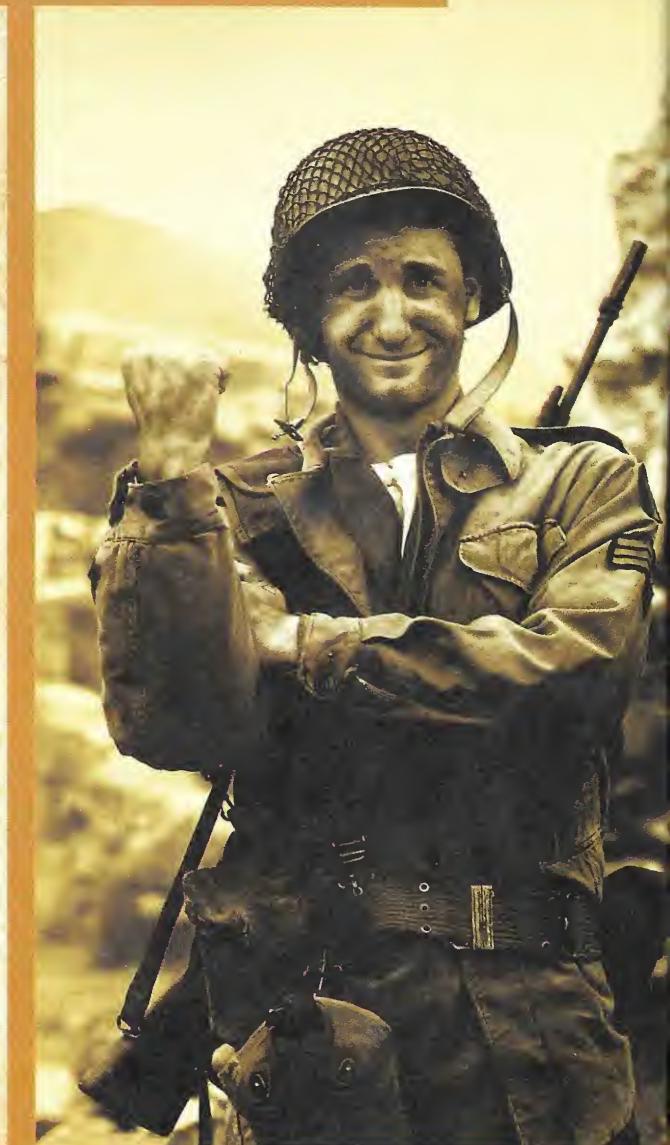


**ANDERSON,
I NEED A VOLUNTEER.**

**THAT TANK UP THE
ROAD? SOMEONE'S GOTTA
TAKE IT OUT.**

**I NEED SOMEONE I CAN
COUNT ON. SOMEONE WHO'S
MAN ENOUGH TO RUN
THROUGH MACHINE-GUN FIRE
TO GET THE JOB DONE.**

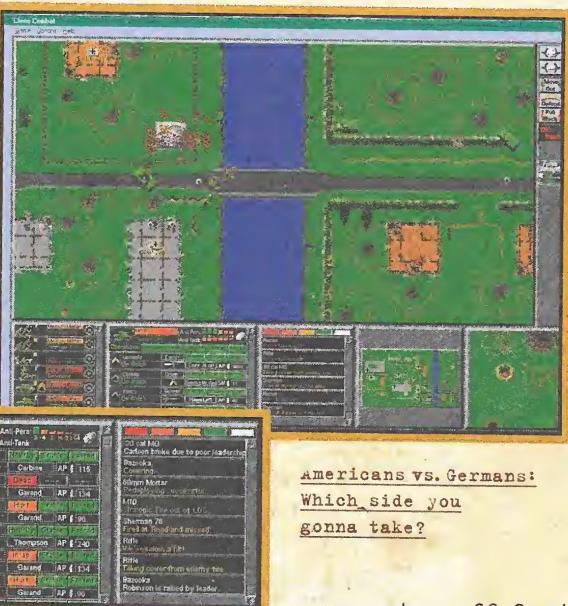
**AND ANDERSON,
THERE COULD BE A MEDAL
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NewsNet

by JOHN PATTERSON

games/software

Monty Python, Siphoned...

Hard on the heels of last year's well-received *Monty Python's Complete Waste of Time* comes the CD-ROM adaptation of the legendary British comedy troupe's best and funniest film, *Monty Python and the Quest for the Holy Grail*. The comedic equivalent of the Beatles have (to a degree) reunited to add new material to this game based on the movie. (The no-shows are John Cleese and the late, lamented Graham

Chapman, who played Arthur himself in the movie.) So, it's your job to find the Grail, as you pass through an assortment of logic- and strategy-based puzzles and games, with clues secreted throughout a bewildering

number of pythonized medieval scenes. Those with the chops and the wit to fight their way through the game's various scenarios will be rewarded with a peek at "King Brian the Wild," a scene from the original script, which was never used and which has never been seen before. It contains a motherload of original animation, also never seen before. But you don't have to play the game to enjoy the clips from the original movie. Check out the sex-starved ladies of Castle Anthrax, play Spank the Virgin, and see the Black Knight stage a limb-by-limb retreat from bodily wholeness, as you carve the truculent and indomitable bastard into his constituent elements ("Pah! 'Tis but a flesh-wound!"). In addition, you can play new arcade games such as Drop Dead, Catch the Cow and Burn the Witch ("Build a bridge out of 'er!!"). The game has loads of Terry Gilliam's brilliantly psychotic and loopy animation and new voice material performed by Gilliam, Eric Idle, Michael Palin and Terry Jones. As a recovering Python Quoter, I can't resist the temptation to share with you my own favorite line from the movie—from the foul mouth of the taunting Frenchman: "I wave my private parts at you, you sons of a second-hand electric donkey-bottom biter!" In 21 years, I've never been able to envisage a "donkey-bottom biter," but it always makes me laugh.

Contact 7th Level at 214.498.8100.



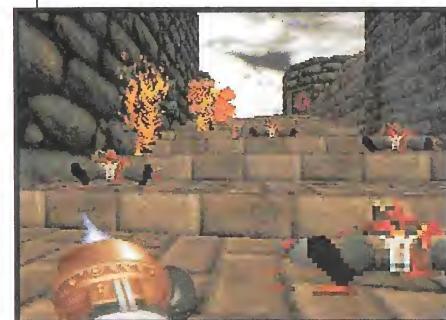
Trouble & Strife

If you've played every manifestation of *Doom* until you're cross-eyed and the blood is pouring out of your CD-ROM drive; if you're sick and tired of waiting for Id to release *Quake*, then it's probably time for you to check out *Strife*—a new variation on the *Doom* engine from Velocity. Programmed using the enhanced Id 3-D graphics engine, *Strife* adds a couple of new dimensions to the first-person shooter game. For a start, *Strife* has a real storyline, strong plot elements and a variety of paths and endings, each depending on the decisions you make throughout the game. You will join the Movement in their fight to overthrow the tyrannical Order—the evil rulers of the universe (it ain't pretty, folks). The challenges take place throughout a virtual world of over 200 square miles and 28 levels of gameplay, each representing a state of technological development, from medieval times

to a futuristic alien spaceship. Superimposed on the essentially *Doom*-like, shooter elements is the information-gathering narrative structure of an RPG. You'll interact with members of the Movement to pick up keys, clues and weapons; you'll encounter vicious, venal and ultra-destructive

adversaries, including the Entity, which thrives on violence, bloodshed and destruction. Weapons include a flame-thrower, a grenade launcher, a crossbow (firing poisonous electric darts...), a micro missile launcher, and the ultimate weapon of mass destruction, the "Sigil." With all its non-linear plot lines, complete dialogue interface with every character, sumptuous graphics, fully interactive environment of vast cities and many mechanical enemies, up to 100 hours of gameplay and the capacity for network and modem play for up to eight players, *Strife* promises to pump a great deal of life into a genre that has lately started to flag. And we've seen the demo, folks. It rocks!

Demo versions of *Strife* can be downloaded from Velocity's website at <http://www.velocitygames.com>. Contact Velocity at 800.VLOCITY.



After featuring an assortment of flight sims in these pages over the past few months, we decided to change the focus a little this month and instead of taking to the skies, we figured that heading for the bottom of the ole deep blue might make for a pleasant change. So here we have *Fast Attack*, from Sierra, which puts you behind the periscope of a Los Angeles Class 688I-nuclear submarine, one of the sleekest and deadliest attack submarines currently slicing its way through the briny in search of whoever's buggin' the bejesus out of the big knobs in Washington these days. *Fast Attack* models the challenges and issues faced by the commander of a

Run Silent,

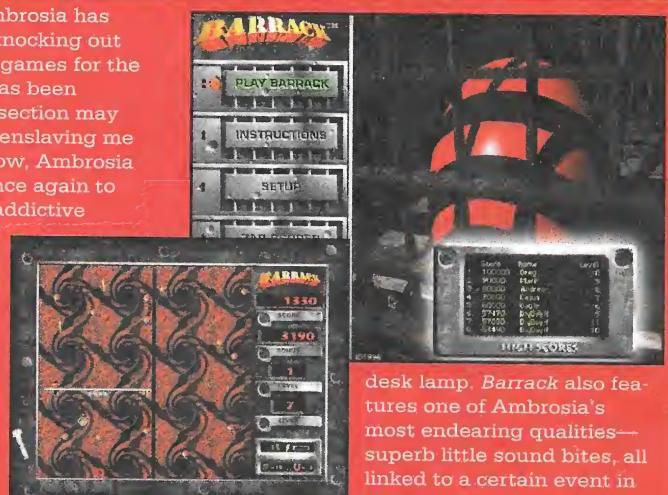
Ssssmooooookin'

Having grossed over 300 million bucks worldwide, it's time for Ace Ventura, the pet detective made famous by rubber-faced Jim Carrey, to take the nation's desktops by storm, and that's exactly what will happen when 7th Level brings *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective* to a CD-ROM drive near you this summer. This action-packed graphic adventure takes Ace, nasty shirt and pompadour intact, on his hardest assignment thus far, to 30 locations worldwide in search of clues to catch a crime syndicate that has improper designs on the world's cuddly beasties. It has a ripping score (featuring, among others, the inestimable Tower of Power), hours of chucklesome dialogue, four cases to solve and more than 25 characters, including Woodstock, Mr. Shikadance and Spike, Ace's monkey accomplice. From Alaska to the Alps, Ace must solve mysteries and unravel clues that will ultimately lead him to the mountain lair of Fatteus Lardeus, the evil nemesis of li'l critters, cuddly an' otherwise. Ace will be voiced by Michael Hall, who plays Ace in the successful CBS Saturday morning series. The game will have feature-film-quality animation (over 11,000 cells) rendered over hand-painted backgrounds in full-screen resolution. That's enough to get us howling at the moon. Contact 7th Level at 214.498.8100.



CONFINED TO BARRACK

A tiny little company called Ambrosia has spent the last couple of years knocking out simple and brilliant shareware games for the Mac. The best of these so far has been *Apeliron*, which readers of this section may remember was responsible for enslaving me for several months last year. Now, Ambrosia has put its best foot forward once again to bring us the almost criminally addictive *Barrack*. Just like *Apeliron*, *Barrack*'s gameplay is the very definition of simplicity: A number of balls, from two upward, appear on your screen, and your job is to use your "barrier gun" to isolate each ball in a separate area, by cutting the screen into sections. Then you need to start reducing the screen area to 20 percent or less of its original size, all the while taking care to prevent the balls from hitting your barriers as they cut across the screen. Bonus points are awarded for isolating as many balls as possible, and for each percentage point over 80. On the way, you can pick up power (little lightning bolts), speed (medicine chests) and lives (gold keys). Also available is a multiplier, which appears from time to time to double or quadruple your score. The bitch about that is that it can also halve it, and as it does so, the soundtrack gives you a nauseatingly smug "tee-hee." After this happened a few times to me, I was ready to stow in the screen of my Mac with the heavy base plate of my



desk lamp. *Barrack* also features one of Ambrosia's most endearing qualities—superb little sound bites, all linked to a certain event in the game: yoo-hoos, tee-hees, and "You disgust me!" when you get knocked out early with an especially lousy low score. And there's also a vicious shark fin called Bosco, who starts to appear after about 10 levels, backed by a *Jaws*-like signature tune. Stay away from this guy. OK, here's how addictive this game is once you've got the hang of the play mechanics: Go back through the paragraph you've just read. Every other period point represents a time when I quit scribbling and played *Barrack* for an hour or more. Ambrosia's nickname for games like *Barrack* is "anti-productivity software." Yeah, we know, we know. Contact Ambrosia at 716.427.2577.

hunter-killer sub with incredibly deep and accurate gameplay. The game was developed with the help of dozens of naval personnel, including weaponry and tactics gurus, and a former commander of a 688-class attack sub, so your authenticity problems are pretty much nixed. You'll travel on 70 missions all over the world to such locations as the Adriatic, the Sea of Japan and that ever-turbulent trouble spot, the Persian Gulf. Your sizable armory contains top-of-the-line, state-of-the-art dangerous toys like Tomahawk cruise missiles, Mark-48 torpedoes and Harpoon missiles. *Fast Attack* offers multiple gameplay arenas. In Training Areas, you'll practice procedures and equipment-handling; in Battle Sets, you can perform a single tour of duty and complete a set of missions in a particular theater; and in



Career, you'll rise through the ranks, traveling the globe and completing multiple missions, either in an aggressive or a peacekeeping role. So c'mon, Marine Boy, get your flippers and snorkel on, it's time to dive! Contact Sierra at 206.649.9800.

Run Deep...

Barney's Amundo

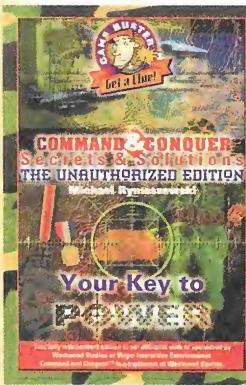
The latest arrival from the seemingly bottomless mine of dinosaur-related games and movies (e.g., *Jurassic Park*, *Primal Rage* and *Barney the Bloody Dinosaur*) comes from Turner Interactive and goes by



the name of *Dinotopia: Living the Adventure*. It takes us into a fabulous realm in which dinosaurs and humans live together in harmony (wait a minute, my anachronism detector just experienced total meltdown, but hey...). Based on the books *Dinotopia: A World Apart* and *Dinotopia: The World Beneath* by James Gurney, the game tells the story of 17-year-old twins, Nathan and Constance, separated after their ship sinks in a storm. Nathan is washed up on the shores of *Dinotopia*, but Constance is nowhere to be found. The game requires you to play the part of Nathan and hunt the length and breadth of the island looking for your sister. You'll interact with dinosaurs and humans as you journey from the Waterfall City to the World Beneath, exploring new habitats, meeting new friends and learning the *Dinotopian* culture. Superlative graphics and a compelling storyline will immerse you in this enchanted island. You'll confront moral dilemmas and puzzles, clues and games as you come to learn more and more about the wild and wacky world of *Jurassic* and *Paleolithic* hijinks. Contact Turner Interactive at 404.885.7972.

NewsNet

Publications



Cheat and Conquer

First off the mark in this month's CP strategy guide sweepstakes is *Command and Conquer Secrets and Solutions: The Unauthorized Edition* by Michael Rymaszewski, which will allow players to engineer their ascent to military genius and glory through special maneuvers and superior battle tactics. The guide will help you in any number of ways, including the best ways to harvest large amounts of Tiberium, how to maximize the impact of cannons, fighter craft and other weapons, how to increase the strategic and tactical usefulness of

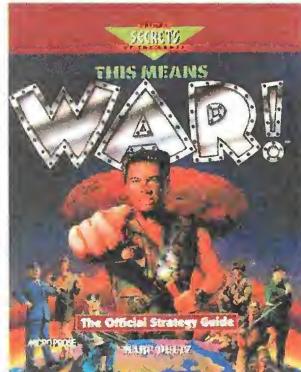
detailed battle maps and mission briefings. Also available are a number of dirty tricks to unravel enemy assaults, the cheats that will help you dominate network play, and even one super-secret tactic that will render computer-based opponents powerless. You see, conquering your enemies isn't enough; they need to be annihilated, and this is your black book. Use it well.

Contact Prima Publishing at 916.632.4400.

Dictator Detector

This Means War! has you playing Hotshot, the enigmatic aide to General Forrest Walker Adams, and your task is to prevent a bunch of psychopathic and megalomaniacal dictators from taking over the pitiful remnants of what used to be civilization. For this, you may find that you need *This Means War! The Official Strategy Guide* by Marc Dultz if you're ever to thwart the nefarious plans of these eight dotty dictators and funky fascists. The guide will provide you with detailed background info on all your opponents, comprehensive briefings on each of the 40 battle scenarios and complete breakdowns of all available equipment, forces, terrains and resources. With this, you'll be given an overview of economic factors and play mechanics, a set of methods for analyzing your troops' AI, plus a total game walkthrough. Yeah, though you walk thigh-deep in blood and viscera through the Valley of the Shadow of Total Turmoil, ye shall fear no evil, because you're forearmed with The Good Book of Knowledge....

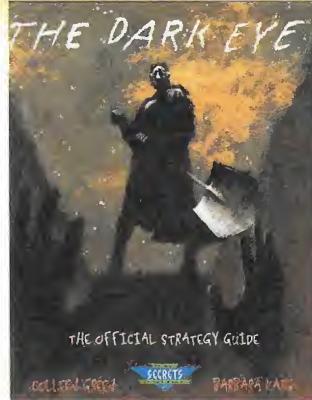
Contact Prima Publishing at 916.632.4400.



Books of the Game

If you simply can't get enough of your favorite computer games and if you're prepared to forsake the cutting edge of modern technology in favor of a trip to the most primitive and eccentric outer reaches of redundant forms of communication, then you'll probably enjoy one or the other of these novelizations of some of your top PC games. (Novelizations are "books." "Books" are made of "paper," and contain "pages" and "words." You'll get the hang of it....) From Prima Publishing, we have the following new releases, which should let you see another side of the adventures you've experienced on your desktops: *X-COM: UFO Defense*, by Diane Duane; *Mission Critical: Death of the Phoenix* by Paul C. Chafe; and *Realms of Arkania: The Charlatan* by Ulrich Kiesow. All are available in bookstores now—\$5.99 apiece.

Contact Prima Publishing at 916.632.4400.



A Dream Within a Dream

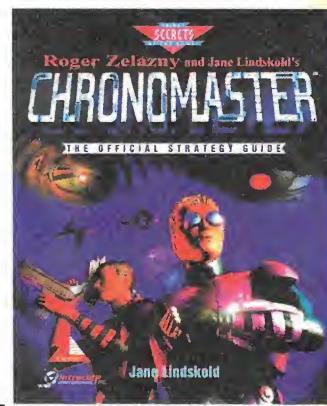
From the tormented and troubled mind of Edgar Allan Poe comes *The Dark Eye*, a game based loosely on tales and poems from the famously neurotic genius, including *The Cask of Amontillado*, *The Masque of the Red Death*, *The Tell-Tale Heart* and *Berenice*. *The Dark Eye: The Official Strategy Guide* by Colleen Green and Barbara Karg, will take you step by step through the tangled labyrinth of the game's freaky and demented scenarios to reveal the secrets lodged in the psyche of each tripped-out character in the game. You'll find solutions to the cryptic puzzles and be able to trace forbidden objects. Plus the guide will show you the secret doors that lead to two lavish graphic novels concealed deep within the game. My favorite aspect of this strategy guide is the inclusion of the six poems and short stories that prompted the game's creation. They're densely written, unhinged tales of decay and madness, filled with death, nutty narrators and feverish prose. Enjoy.

Contact Prima Publishing at 916.632.4400.

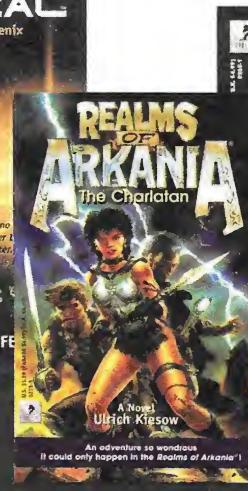
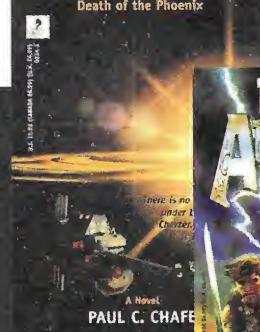
Now's The Time!

In *Chronomaster*'s future of custom-built realities or "pocket universes," you'll probably need a little help from your friends to finish the game. Someone or something is busy putting people's universes on ice by freezing them in time. You, Korda the Chronomaster, are the only remaining hope, so be sure that you don't leave home without your copy of *Roger Zelazny and Jane Lindskold's Chronomaster: The Official Strategy Guide* by Jane Lindskold (hey, you can't get much more official than a strategy guide written by one of the game's creators). The guide will help you roam freely through time-frozen worlds, show you how to manipulate "bottled time" to coax a universe out of stasis, how to solve the deadly puzzles of cyborgs, pirates and witches, help you confront six universes and solve numerous puzzles. Finally, you'll be able to restart the shut-down universe and return justice to the stars. Dig?

Contact Prima Publishing at 916.632.4400.



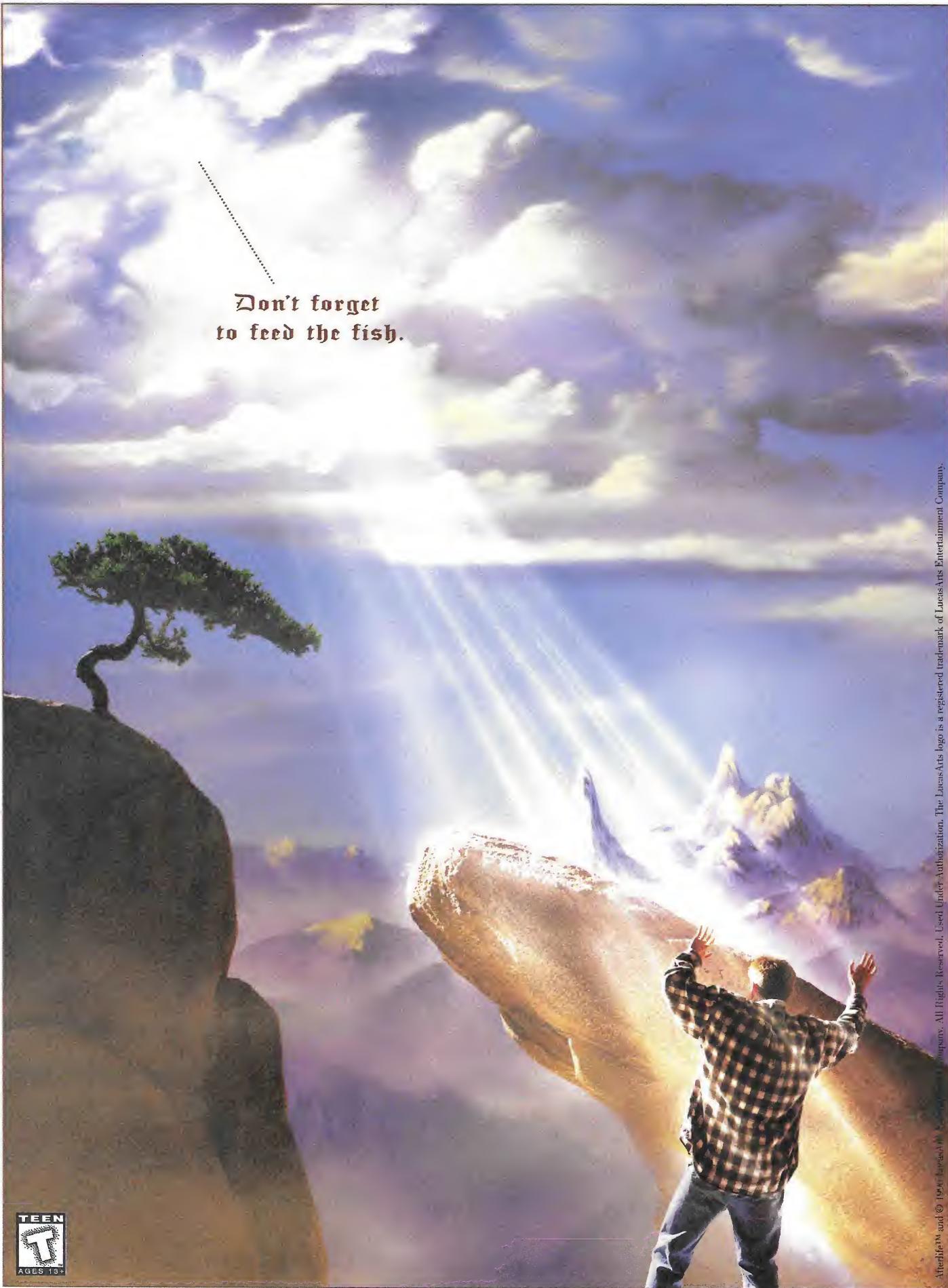
MISSION CRITICAL





nd on the 8th day,
He split to Maui.





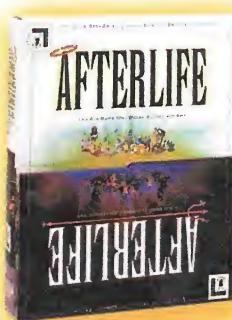
Don't forget
to feed the fish.





AND LEFT YOU IN CHARGE.

INTRODUCING *Afterlife*.™ THE LAST WORD IN SIMS.



WINDOWS 95, DOS AND MACINTOSH
CD-ROM



BUILD AND MANAGE TWO PLANES,
HEAVEN AND HELL, SIMULTANEOUSLY.



JASPER WORMSWORTH AND ARIA
GOODHALO HELP YOU KEEP TRACK OF
YOUR SUCCESSES AND FAILURES.

Welcome to *Afterlife*. The first world-building simulation that lets you manage two prime planes of "unreal estate"—heaven and hell—simultaneously. Possessed of an unearthly sense of humor, it all begins in a God-knows-where galaxy. There, billions of departed souls hunger for you to give them what they deserve.

Start with the Pearly Gates of Heaven or the Fiery Gates of Hell, zone in blocks of deadly Sins or goodly Virtues and build some roads. Soon, the dearly departed arrive in droves.

Keep them happy and you flourish.

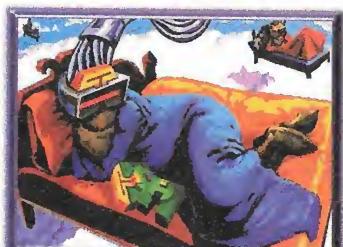
Lose too many along the way and it's a visit from the Four Surfers of the Apocalypso (not a good time). Factor in a half-dozen or so disasters (not including total annihilation), money problems, lost souls, headaches on the planet below, and things get complicated in a hurry.

With over 200 artistically rendered rewards, nearly 300 detailed tiles and buildings, more maps, graphs and charts than you can shake a pitchfork at, plus the most sophisticated engine of any sim game beginning with the letter "A," you've got infinite hours of game-play.

Afterlife: Reach the end or die trying.



DISASTERS OF DIVINE
PROPORTION INCLUDE DISCO INFERNO
(PICTURED), HELL IN A HANDBASKET
AND HEAVEN NOSE.



KEEP SOULS HAPPY BY PROVIDING
THEM WITH THE REWARDS AND
PUNISHMENTS THEY EXPECT, INCLUDING
ETERNAL AFTERNOON, TOOTH OR
DARE AND DREAMADISE (PICTURED).



FOLLOW THE HIGHS AND LOWS
OF INDIVIDUAL SOULS THROUGH
THE SOULVIEW FEATURE.



<http://www.lucasarts.com>
CIRCLE #105 ON READER SERVICE CARD

NewsNet

Peripherals

Stack 'em!

If you're tired of foraging through a pile of silver discs and jewel cases to find your favorite CD-ROM or game disc, then it's time for you to get organized, bro. To that



end, you should check out the CD Silo from

MediaMate. Its see-through case keeps dust and dirt off each disc's data surface; an index records each CD's title and location, and it stores and organizes 20 CDs and helps

you to conserve desk space. As I gaze across the seething and festering swamp of trash that I call my desk, I can only lament that MediaMate didn't send me a sample to test-drive.

Contact Hunt Mfg. at 800.446.7823.

Rack 'em!

Also from MediaMate—a company that was obviously born under the anal-retentive sign of Virgo—comes the CD Monitor Deck, a handy and simple little number that allows you to store up to 21 CDs and their jewel cases in a deck that sits under your monitor. As



Winging It

All those of you who are addicted to *Doom*-style first person shooters should take a look at Logitech Inc.'s new controller, the WingMan Warrior, specifically designed for gaming in this hugely popular genre. The primary innovation here is the separation of firing aim from navigation (pursuit/dodging). This results in precision aiming and faster, easier play in first-person games. The WingMan Warrior functions in both digital and analog modes in MS-DOS and Windows 95 environments. With a solid, comfortable grip and a heavy base for stability, the WingMan Warrior provides proportional forward, back and sideways strafing control, 360-degree continuous optical spin control for turning and aiming, and four buttons and hat control for selecting weapons, opening doors, run/walk mode switching and a 180-degree instant turnaround. A nice feature is that the Warrior functions as a 100-percent-compatible WingMan Extreme, which means that it offers backward compatibility with all flight and car simulations, as well as with other games that support a joystick. This should make life a little more enjoyable when—or if—it *Quake* ever decides to put in an appearance.

Contact Logitech at 510.713.4463.

well as tidying your desk, the Deck elevates your monitor for an ergonomic by four inches for a more comfortable viewing height. The Deck's heavy-duty construction supports up to a 19-inch monitor, so you have no more excuses. Go tidy your room!

Contact Hunt Mfg. at 800.446.7823.



Tilt!

With about a million pinball simulators currently flooding the home PC gaming market, it's a surprise to realize that no one has yet dreamed up the idea of a home flipper controller. ThrustMaster has now come to the rescue, however, with its simple but obvious Wizard Pinball Controller, which consists of two flipper controls that are attached to both ends of a player's keyboard. Each control features dual-stage buttons that activate the upper and lower flippers independently in supported titles. The Wizard also features easy plug-'n'-play installation and a custom-designed optical potentiometer that senses table-nudging and relays that information to the software. And if the controls are too hard, the player will tilt. So, no more relying on the Ctrl and Shift keyboard; realism is on the way. Also included in the package is the classic pinball sim *Royal Flush*, with its original table design, sounds and stationary and scrolling playfields. Prepare to have your wrists seize up!

For more information, call ThrustMaster at 503.639.3200.

Good Vibrations...

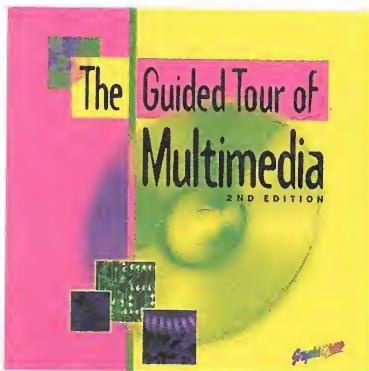
If you're looking for a state-of-the-art pilot's chair to enhance the realism of your favorite flight sim, you should talk to the folks at ThunderSeat (splendid name!). The ThunderSeat Ace is affordably priced (159.95), but has been built to the same exacting standards as the sim seats that ThunderSeat has been designing and constructing for its military customers for years now. It has a comfortable, contoured shape and a jet-like reclining seating position. When plugged into your favorite sound card, a subwoofer built into the base of the 'Seat is coupled to the wave chamber inside the hollow chair. As the diaphragm of the speaker expands, it compresses the air inside the ThunderSeat, generating vibrations in the tuned resonant panels, and turns the whole seat into a speaker! Feel the recoil of your guns, understand how it feels to have your craft strafed with bullets. It's not limited to flight sims, either; it will bring a whole new sensory dimension to driving sims such as *NASCAR Racing* and *IndyCar Racing*, and *Doom* will never be the same again. You can upgrade it too, with accessories like ThunderSeat's retractable Keyboard Holder, ThunderFlight Rudders and Side Consoles for cockpit-like placement of your joystick and mouse. ThunderSeat has garnered plaudits from professionals in all areas of the Air Force and from gaming experts nationwide. If it's good enough for them, it must be good news for your butt! For more information, call ThunderSeat at 800.8.THUNDER.



Shelf-burners for April '96

Multimedia for Dummies

Given that you're holding this magazine in your hot little hands, it's pretty unlikely that you're unfamiliar with the rubric and rudiments of all things pertaining to multimedia. On the other hand, I suppose it's not totally inconceivable. If you are perchance a tad "challenged" in the multimedia sphere of knowledge, or even if you could benefit from a little back-to-basics learning, it's probably a good idea for you to check out the second edition of *The Guided Tour of Multimedia*, now available from Graphix



Zone. Its six chapters offer answers to all your basic and advanced questions on all topics relating to consumer multimedia issues: from hardware and software functions and usage to developing multimedia presentations using sound, video, animation and interactivity. You can configure all the information in the way that will best suit your purposes: Use it as a reference tool to research phrases and topics; use it at your own pace, tackling one subject at a time, in any breadth or depth you choose; or simply allow yourself to be taken through the whole program from beginning to end—learning all about, hardware, software, clip media, authoring tools and interactivity. Also, to expand the range of available information, the disc includes a Starter Kit for America Online plus 10 free hours, and Internet access software and five free hours from Earthlink. A Key Word Index lists all appearances of key words and phrases, with hyperlinks to those locations. You also get a pretty fab collection of trial version software from a bunch of hefty multimedia publishers such as Adobe (Premiere and Photoshop), Horizons and Macromedia. With free clip media libraries and an easy-access Glossary of Terms, you'll find that the road to creating your very own multimedia extravaganzas is a lot smoother with every passing hour.

Contact Graphix Zone at 714.833.3838.

Top 20

IBM PC Games (MS-DOS, Windows)

1. *Wing Commander IV* by Origin/EA
2. *Myst* by Brøderbund
3. *Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness* by Blizzard
4. *Doom II* by GT Interactive
5. *Microsoft Flight Simulator* by Microsoft
6. *Ultimate Doom: Thy Flesh Consumed* by GT Interactive
7. *MechWarrior II* by Activision
8. *Star Wars Rebel Assault II* by LucasArts
9. *Hexen* by GT Interactive
10. *NBA Live 96* by Electronic Arts
11. *SimCity 2000 Collection* by Maxis
12. *Command & Conquer* by VIE
13. *The Beast Within* by Sierra
14. *Need for Speed* by Electronic Arts
15. *NASCAR Racing* by Papyrus
16. *11th Hour* by VIE
17. *You Don't Know Jack* by Berkeley
18. *Mortal Kombat 3* by GT Interactive
19. *Monopoly* by VIE
20. *Phantasmagoria* by Sierra

Top 10

Macintosh Games

1. *Myst* by Brøderbund
2. *Top Ten Pack* by Electronic Arts
3. *SimCity 2000* by Maxis
4. *FA-18 Hornet* by Graphic Simulations
5. *Links Pro* by Access
6. *Doom II* by GT Interactive
7. *Warcraft: Orcs and Humans* by Blizzard
8. *Star Wars Rebel Assault II* by LucasArts
9. *Ultimate Doom: Thy Flesh Consumed* by GT Interactive
10. *Arcade Pack* by WizardWorks

Top 10

CD-ROM Games

1. *Myst* by Brøderbund
2. *Wing Commander IV* by Origin
3. *Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness* by Blizzard
4. *Ultimate Doom: Thy Flesh Consumed* by GT Interactive
5. *Star Wars Rebel Assault II* by LucasArts
6. *Mechwarrior II* by Activision
7. *Doom II* by GT Interactive
8. *NBA Live 96* by Electronic Arts
9. *Hexen* by GT Interactive
10. *Microsoft Flight Simulator* by Microsoft

Top 10

Baker and Taylor's Selling CD-ROM Software for February '96

1. *11th Hour* by VIE
2. *Ascendancy* by Brøderbund
3. *Bad Day on the Midway* by Inscape
4. *Beavis and Butt-head in Virtual Stupidity* by Viacom
5. *Flight Unlimited* by Looking Glass
6. *Hardball 5* by Accolade
7. *Lost Mind of Dr. Brain* by Sierra
8. *Mechwarrior II* by Activision
9. *Myst (Mac Version)* by Brøderbund
10. *Monopoly* by VIE

HARD DRIVE TOP 5

Every month, the editors of *Computer Player* have the dreadful task of deleting games off our hard drives. Although we hate doing it (actually, there are a few we've enjoyed deleting), it must be done to make room for the incoming batch. Yet there always seem to be about five games that we just can't bring ourselves to delete no matter how hard we try. This month's winners are:

Mike Davila

1. *Command & Conquer: The Covert Operations* by Westwood Studios (IBM PC CD)
2. *Civilization II* by MicroProse (IBM PC CD)
3. *Ripper* by Take 2 Interactive (IBM PC CD)
4. *TerraNova* by Looking Glass (IBM PC CD)
5. *Star Trek: DS9-Harbinger* by Viacom (IBM PC CD)

Jeff James

1. *Fantasy General* by SSI (IBM PC CD)
2. *TerraNova* by Looking Glass (IBM PC CD)
3. *Duke Nukem 3D* by Apogee/FormGen (IBM PC)
4. *Civilization II* by MicroProse (IBM PC CD)
5. *Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness* by Blizzard (IBM PC CD)

Glenn Broderick

1. *Duke Nukem 3D* by Apogee/FormGen (IBM PC)
2. *Ripper* by Take 2 Interactive (IBM PC CD)
3. *SpyCraft* by Activision (IBM PC CD)
4. *TerraNova* by Looking Glass (IBM PC CD)
5. *Zork Nemesis* by Activision (IBM PC CD)

All information (except Baker and Taylor's Top 10) taken from PC Data's Hits List of top-selling software for the month of January 1996. The list is based on units sold by 16 retail chains that represent more than 4,500 stores. For more information, contact PC Data at: 703.435.1025.

■ THE BEST GAMES YOU CAN DOWNLOAD

Demoware vs. Shareware

Thanks in part to the runaway success of *Doom* as a shareware product, game developers of all stripes have jumped on the "try before you buy" bandwagon. Commercial game publishers such as Westwood (*Command & Conquer*) and LucasArts (*Dark Forces*) have posted demo versions of their games (often called *demoware*) on the Internet, and even more are following suit. With commercial game developers distributing demos of their games as shareware, how can any self-respecting gamer tell the difference between a commercial game demo and a shareware game?

According to Tom Hall at 3D Realms, shareware games provide more gaming value for the buck. "While commercial demos give you a brief nibble of the game, a shareware game gives you a more complete experience." Like Hall, many of the shareware developers I talked to stressed that to compete in the marketplace, shareware games must have more playability and game depth than demos. "If a player downloads a shareware prod-

uct and finds it lacking, he will be unlikely to register it," says Jeff McBride, a programmer at StarCrossed Software. "Shareware developers live and die by the quality of their shareware."

Many shareware developers believe that this profusion of commercial game demos is good for the industry. "It shows that the shareware sales channel is viable and lends legitimacy to what we're doing," says Dave Snyder of MVP Software. Though the lines of distinction between shareware and demoware may be blurring, when it comes to depth of play and game value, shareware comes out on top. More importantly, shareware may be the last bastion of the small, independent game developer. Commercial game development can cost millions, but many of the best shareware games are produced for a fraction of the cost. Spiderweb's Jeff Vogel agrees: "Shareware is the only way for a lone person—with a compiler, some time and a dream—to create a product, offer it for sale and, in some cases, make a fair amount of money."

If you develop or publish shareware games and would like to see your products covered in Shareware Spotlight, contact Jeff James via e-mail at jjjames@aol.com

SHAREWARE GAME RATINGS

REVIEWS AND PREVIEWS

If a game is reviewed here, we guarantee that it will be a good gaming value. Although most shareware entertainment products won't earn the "Shareware Standout" award, many still deserve the recognition that a review in *Computer Player* provides.

SHAREWARE STANDOUT

Only the very best shareware games are fit to wear the "Shareware Standout" logo. If you spot a piece of shareware bearing one of these seals, you can rest assured that it's among the finest available.



DOWNLOAD DOGS

This is our rogues' gallery of shareware games gone bad. If a game is listed here, it probably has several of the following problems: abnormally large file size, poor gaming value, lack of originality, excessive bugs and glitches, etc. Going online is too expensive for you to download bad games, so we'll point out the games to avoid.



Where do I find these games

Most of the games listed here can be found on the major commercial online services, including America Online and CompuServe. On America Online, perform a file search in the PC Gaming forums (keyword: PC GAMES). On CompuServe, check out the Gamer's forum (GO GAMERS). Regardless of which service you use, to find what you're looking for, do a file search using the title of the game as a keyword.

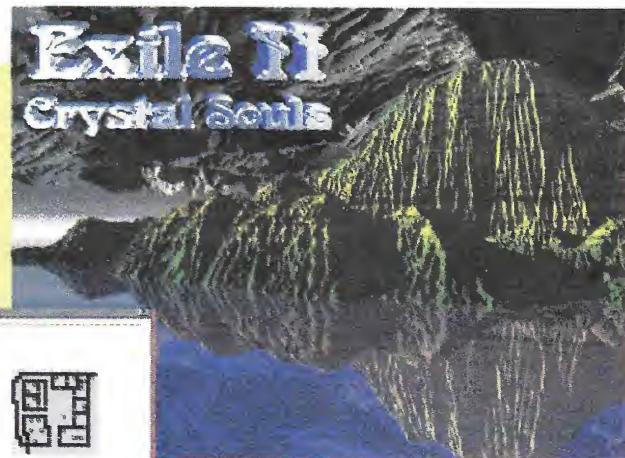
PREVIEW

Exile II: Crystal Souls

Available: Spring '96
System: Mac, Windows
Publisher: Spiderweb Software
E-mail: spidweb@aol.com

Over the past year or so, game programmer Jeff Vogel has been hard at work on *Exile II: Crystal Souls*—the sequel to his popular shareware role-playing game, *Exile*. The version I looked at was close to being completed and included most of the features that will

appear in the final version. These additions include a redesigned interface and an all-new story, plus a nifty automap that keeps track of your progress through the gameworld in real-time. If you get stumped, the extensive online help will keep you fight-



ing the bad guys, not your computer.

Some characters, such as the lizard-like Slith and the Nephil (cat-like humanoids), make a return appearance. Like *Exile*, *Exile II*

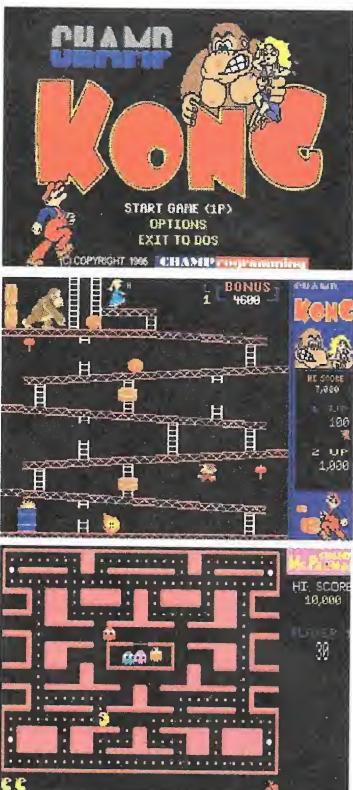
REVIEWS

If you've spent much time in a software store lately, you've undoubtedly seen a flood of commercial game developers peddling nostalgia. More specifically, companies such as Activision (*Atari 2600 Action Pack*) and GT Interactive (*Williams Arcade Classics*) have learned that many computer-savvy consumers have a soft spot for classic gaming favorites. That appeal isn't lost on shareware game developer Champ Games, who plans to release an entire line of classic shareware games.

I downloaded and played *Champ Kong* first; aside from the name and a few minor differences, this game is *Donkey Kong* for the PC. I also spent some time with the Champ Games' variant of *Ms. Pac-Man*, although the version I played will soon be superseded by an updated one with better sound and control options. In the works are even more titles, including *Ms. Pac-Em*, *Centipede*, *Frog-Em*, *Galaxia*, *Invaders*, *Asteroids*, *Galagon* and *Burger Chef*. All will closely mimic coin-op arcade classics of years gone by; from what I've seen so far, I have every reason to think that all these games will be just as good as *Champ Kong*. If you're longing for a bit of game nostalgia, head over to the Champ Games Website and see what they have in the works.

Champ Kong v1.0

Registration fee: \$17.95 (plus \$2 S&H)
Publisher: Champ Games, 34-3 Shunpike Rd., Cromwell, CT 06416
Website: <http://www.champgames.com>
E-mail: support@champgames.com
System: IBM PC/MS-DOS



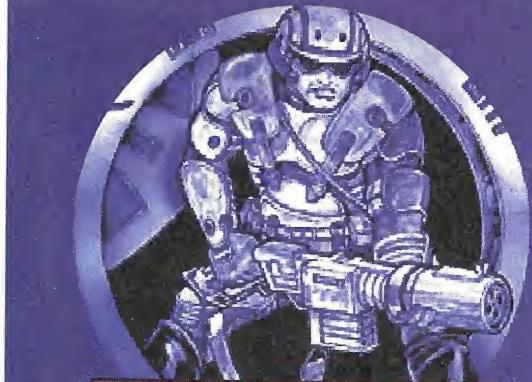
pays homage to Origin's *Ultima* series with an overhead perspective that shows your surroundings. The graphics are a bit on the utilitarian side, but they work well within the scope of the game. Promising dozens—if not hundreds—of hours of gameplay, *Exile II* will be a huge game. From what I've seen so far, *Exile II: Crystal Souls* is shaping up to be one of the best shareware role-playing games of the year.



Operation: Carnage v1.0

Operation: Carnage v1.0

Registration fee: \$24.95 (plus \$3 S/H)
Publisher: Beaucomm Interactive, 327 E Penny Rd., Wenatchee, WA 98801
Website: <http://www.beaucomm.com>
E-mail: techsupport@beaucomm.com
Telephone: 800.266.3281
System: IBM PC/MS-DOS



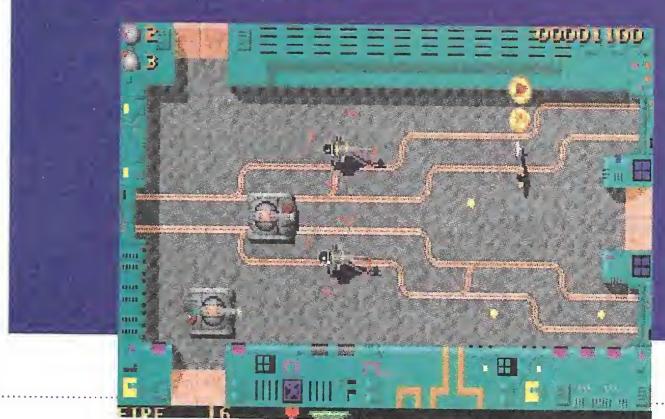
If you've ever played *Smash TV* at your local arcade (or on the Sega Genesis or Super Nintendo) and wished that someone would bring out this game for the PC, your prayers have been answered—sort of. With the release of *Operation: Carnage*, developer Midnight Synergy and publisher Beaucomm Interactive have released the closest thing yet to *Smash TV* on the PC.

For the most part, they've done a great job. The action is fast and furious, and the driving pop soundtrack easily puts you in the mood for zombie zapping. The graphics are crisp and well-defined, and the sound effects are suitably gory and gruesome. The keyboard is a bit awkward as a control device—it's hard to move in one direction while firing in another—but the game comes into its own when you use a joystick or gamepad.

Operation: Carnage may not be much more than a poor man's *Smash TV*, but it's a good game nonetheless. If



your gaming tastes are more on the more frenetic end of the spectrum, *Operation: Carnage* should provide you with hours of pixel-blasting excitement.



REVIEWS



Previewed in the March issue of *Computer Player*, Safari Software's *Seek and Destroy* has at last been released. Here's the gist of your mission, soldier: take to the air with your helicopter, or hit the ground running with a turf-chewing tank. Regardless of which vehicle you choose, you can arm both to the gritted teeth with chain guns, rockets, air-to-ground missiles, air-to-air missiles and napalm canisters. At the base equipment shop, you can also buy airstrikes and use them to blast your enemies en masse. Only limited numbers of these weapons are available for use in the shareware game; to access the full arsenal, you'll have to pony up \$20 bucks for the registered version.



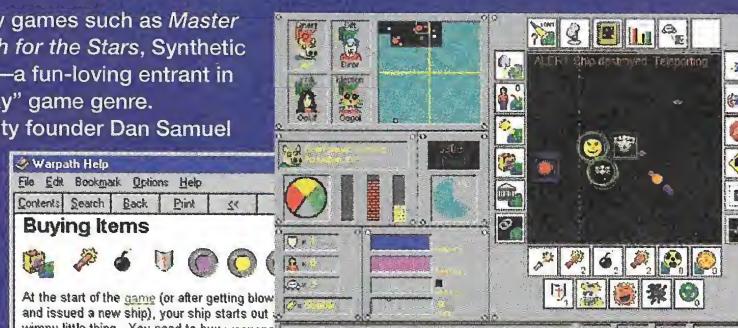
light gaming fare, but it's well worth the price of admission.

Warpath v1.0

Registration fee: \$19.95 (plus \$3 S&H)
Publisher: Synthetic Reality, 1248 Van Dyck Dr., Sunnyvale, CA 94087
E-mail: 70110.434@compuserve.com
System: IBM PC/MS-DOS, Windows 3.1

In the tradition of space strategy games such as *Master of Orion*, *Ascendancy* and *Reach for the Stars*, Synthetic Reality has developed *Warpath*—a fun-loving entrant in the crowded “conquer the galaxy” game genre.

Developed by Synthetic Reality founder Dan Samuel (along with his 9-year old son Benjamin), *Warpath* is quirky and lighthearted. Like many other space strategy games, your goal is to convince all the planets in this quadrant that you should be the top banana in this galaxy. You can do that by taking the “red” path (war) or the “green” path (peace); regardless, you have to face off against up to four other players. The game graphics are a little on the cartoonish side, and the sound effects are suspiciously like something you'd hear on *Star Trek*. The



At the start of the game (or after getting blown up and issued a new ship), your ship starts out with wimpy little things. You need to buy weapons extensions for it, or you will be the laughingstock of the galaxy.

Shopping

The items you require can be found in the shopping mall and trading posts of friendly inhabited planets. Uninhabited planets have no stores (well, none that cater to the LIVING... just kidding, no ghosts in this game). Unfriendly planets have stores, they just won't sell to YOU. So go to yellow and green planets when you want to buy. Green planets may give you a better price. (and, then again, they might not. Could be a vaporous promise). (and if you are on the RED Path, then go to RED and yellow stores).

You can only shop at the planet you are currently orbiting. Once you are orbiting a

Seek and Destroy v1.0

Registration fee: \$20 (plus \$4 S&H)
Publisher: Safari Software, 10406 Holbrook Dr., Potomac, MD 20854
Website: <http://www.epicgames.com>
E-mail: 74777.1116@compuserve.com
Telephone: 800.238.1393
System: IBM PC/MS-DOS

During play, the play field revolves around you as you move over terrain and hunt down enemies. It's a cool effect, giving the game a sweeping, panoramic feel. There are lots of little details, too: torched buildings and doomed enemy tanks explode into showers of spinning debris, leaving behind smoking craters. Without serial support or network play, *Seek and Destroy* must rely on instant arcade gratification to achieve maximum gaming value. In that respect, *Seek and Destroy* hits a long ball into the stands; it may be

**Shareware Games to Avoid****Quara v1.0**

by Cypris Software
Filename: QUARAS.ZIP
File size: 3.2 megabytes
A new shareware adventure from Cypris Software, *Quara v1.0* sounded like a game worth playing—at least, the file description sounded promising. On downloading and booting up the game, however, I realized that it was a turkey—and not even a golden one.

The game begins with the player shipwrecked in a strange land and told by a telepathic old woman of the dangers that lie ahead. Most of the game graphics look as if they were digitized from the programmer's own family photo album, and they range widely in quality. In the first scene, looking at the water prints the message, “You don't like the water mostly because this is where people dispose of their wastes.” It gets even better: when you wander into the town, you come across the sheriff and storekeeper, but before you can talk to them, you must solve an algebraic equation (I'm not making this up); if your math skills are up to snuff, you're then given the option of shaking the sheriff's hand or giving the storekeeper a hearty handclasp. Throw in a dozen spelling and grammatical errors, and *Quara* struggles to achieve mediocrity on just about all counts. Unless you're a glutton for punishment, avoid *Quara* like the plague.

whole game is given an upbeat treatment and has a somewhat cutesy look and feel.

But don't let this fool you into thinking that *Warpath* is a halfhearted effort; on the contrary, Dan and Benjamin have crafted *Warpath* into a solid gaming product. The

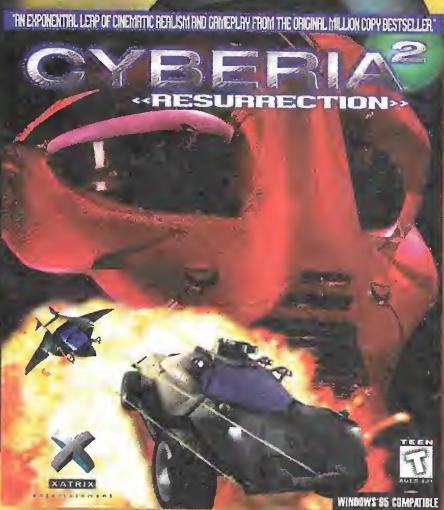
online help is superlative, and the multiplayer features—modern play in the shareware version, joined by network play in the registered variant—are some of the best I've encountered in a homebrew shareware title.

If you don't think levity has any place in a game of galactic conquest, you'd be well advised to motor on to some other quadrant. After you've played the space dust out of *Stars!* and blasted the last alien in *Master of Orion*, however, you may be in the mood to warp space into the *Warpath* galaxy.



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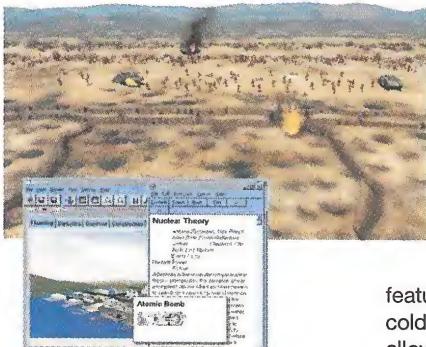
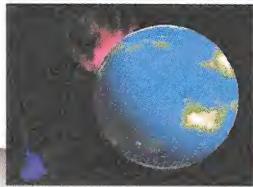
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CIRCLE #104 ON READER SERVICE CARD

Destiny

System: IBM PC CD
Genre: strategy/simulation
Publisher: Interactive Magic
Developer: Dagger Interactive
Available: now



For those of you who are unfamiliar with the term "hubris," let me briefly define it. Hubris is a tragic flaw; it makes you want to be just like God. Shakespeare had a field day with this flaw: more than a few of his characters suffered because of it. Today, that tragic flaw has spawned a multi-million-dollar software market. To quote Ted Stryker, "Sometimes, irony can be pretty ironic." Games that allow you to take on the role of God are more popular than ever. Building on this popularity, I-Magic will soon be releasing its latest "god game" *Destiny*.

In an industry filled with hype, I-Magic's honesty about its latest product is refreshing. It's very apparent that this is a "Civilization emulator." In some respects, it is certainly a clone; in other respects, it has the potential to ascend—among a sea of pretenders—to the throne of strategy king. Just how can it do this? By providing players with enough significant improvements over Civ to make the experience completely new.

Destiny promises to make its biggest improvements in the gameplay department. There are many changes, but what will probably stand out as its biggest advancement is the player's ability to get into the action with a first-person perspective. This is a very nice feature for people (like me) who are tired of being cold, omniscient gods; the first-person perspective allows you to get down and dirty with the little people who make you so powerful. In addition,



Some of these battle sequences have to be seen to be believed.

Destiny gives you the option to choose your objective; you can either play for military victory or for scientific achievement. This open-endedness is sure to appeal to many who feel stifled by the limited objectives in *Civ* and its brethren.

One of my biggest gripes about strategies/sims is their graphics ineptitude. Though graphics are only a small piece of a strategy game's total package, they're an important piece. How often have you built up to full military conflict and been disappointed by what looks like a bunch of pixels mingling with one another? Recognizing the need for outstanding graphics, I-Magic is giving the *Civ* engine a facelift, complete with 3-D rendering and texture maps. If these graphics are seamlessly integrated into the

game, *Destiny* might be able to set a new benchmark for the strategy genre.

This title is incomplete at press time, but it seems certain that its innovations on the *Civ* engine will draw quite a crowd. Gamers everywhere are starting to yawn at the standard strategy fare; additions and changes to established engines are inevitable. Just how well these changes are received will define the direction of future strategy titles.

Shattered Steel

System: IBM PC CD
Genre: action
Publisher: Interplay
Developer: Interplay
Available: August '96



You've got a date with destiny!

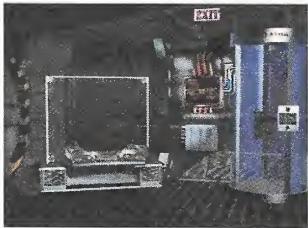
You can call me superficial; you can even call me shallow; just don't call me early in the morning. I like (gasp) games that don't require a whole lot of thought. I get the most enjoyment out of games that I can just drop into the old CD tray and start playing. Who wants to read instructions and/or readme files for two hours just to get the game started?—not me. That's why Interplay's *Shattered Steel* appealed to me so much from the minute it invaded my CD-ROM drive. I read the instructions for maybe three minutes, and I was ready to rumble.

You play a freelance mercenary investigating the communications outposts of a mining company on a planet called Lanis 3. When you arrive, you discover an alien race bent on destroying humans and



anything they've made. These malevolent aliens have destroyed the communications installations, so you must fight them alone. Using your Planet Runner (pronounced "mech"), you need to blast through the alien-infested planet to stay alive.

In my humble opinion, *Shattered Steel* has the potential to appeal to the many gamers who've been put off by the expansive controls usually associated with mech games. The game is still incomplete, but it seems a safe bet to say that Interplay won't get rid of the delightfully simple controls in the final version. Anyone who has ever felt daunted by the controls of standard mech games, but likes the notion of controlling a mech, should definitely keep an eye on *Shattered Steel*.



Deadlock!

We're at an interesting point in gaming. Entirely unique game concepts are as elusive as the Holy Grail, so game makers are forced to do a lot of interesting things with existing game models. Adding their unique twist on resource management, Accolade will soon release *Deadlock!* As of this writing, the game is almost (95-percent) complete, and it looks as if it could shape up to be a major player in the resource management market.

Set in the future, *Deadlock!* presents you with a

System: IBM PC CD
Genre: strategy/simulation
Publisher: Accolade
Developer: Accolade
Available: June '96



precarious situation. You can play one of seven species battling for control of a virgin planet. Gaining control isn't as easy as it might sound. Using a variety of methods, you need to establish five city centers before any of your opponents. If you can do this, the planet is yours. A unique feature of this game is that you need to split your focus between increasing the power of your own species and sabotaging the efforts of your opponents. This combination of objectives, resource management and strategy fills a niche that has been apparent since *SimCity* was released.

A defining attribute of this game and a major objective for all of Accolade's upcoming titles is online capability. When I say "online," I refer to every conceivable connotation of the word: you can play over a LAN; you can play with a serial connection; you can play using Internet services (late-breaking news: in addition to MPath, Accolade just signed with TEN); you can play using modems; and you can play with e-mail. That's a long list that's bound to appeal to the ever-growing audience of online gamers.



This tutorial is definitely a good idea.

The Mindwarp

Can it be? Are the undisputed granddaddys of simulation games dabbling in the unconscionable realm of action games?! As hard as it might be for some of you sim-heads to accept, Maxis is hard at work on its first action title, *The Mindwarp*. I can already hear the backlash from computer geeks everywhere. A strong analogy can be made



Fans of the surreal won't be disappointed.

between this game and Dylan's choice to play an electric guitar, but I won't get into that.

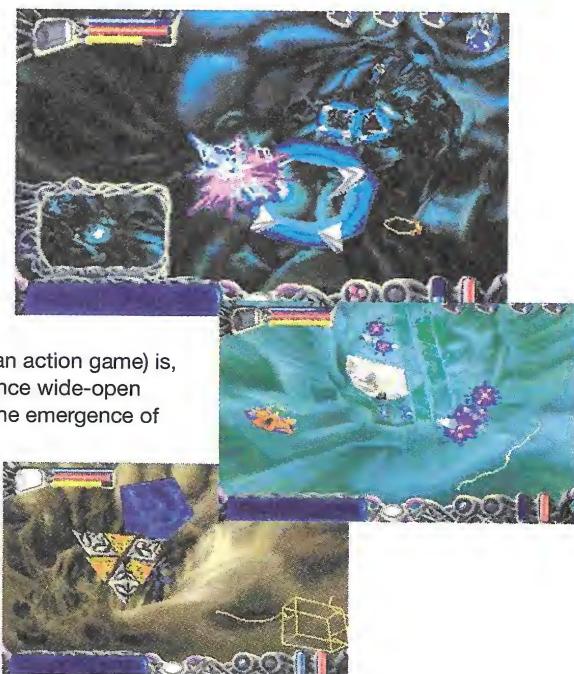
The Mindwarp is still a long way from completion, so information on it is scarce at best. From what I've gathered, you will play as a Synaptic Probe. Using this probe, you'll be expected to navigate through a treacherous "alien dream-

scape." A potentially neat feature of this title, only alluded to so far, is Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the environment through which you travel. The corridors you're going down, for example, could reconfigure themselves in accordance with how well you're playing. To quote a wise man, "Groovy." Just how well this AI is implemented remains to be seen; the idea, though, is fascinating.

The big, basic question on everyone's mind (once they come to terms with the fact that Maxis is doing an action game) is, "Will it be any good?" The once wide-open action genre is now seeing the emergence of some heavyweights.

Maxis' name recognition, though a powerful tool, needs to be backed up by substantial gameplay. Can they do it? In the coming months, keep your eyes on our review section for a verdict.

System: IBM PC CD
Genre: action
Publisher: Maxis
Developer: Maxis
Available: second quarter '96



Lighthouse

System: IBM PC CD
Genre: puzzle
Publisher: Sierra
Developer: Sierra
Available: June '96



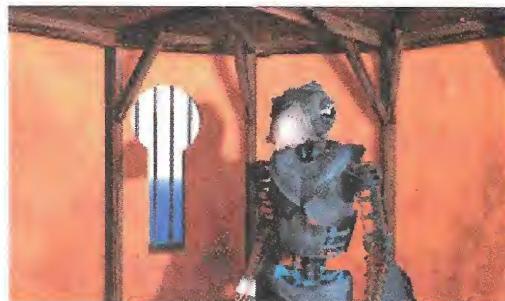
I think Sierra has finally managed to make a machine that produces software by itself. How the hell else can you explain a company that manages to simultaneously release so many titles every month of the year?! Rounding out the software giant's offerings for June is a little puzzle/adventure entitled *Lighthouse*.

Using a variation on the solid engine that made *Myst* so very successful, *Lighthouse* casts players in the shoes of a guy who's desperately seeking to save his friend and his friend's baby. Sounds pretty weird, doesn't it? Wait until you see the opening scene! You get a call from your friend, Dr. Krick (who, incidentally, lives in a lighthouse), and he asks you to come watch his daughter. When you get to the lighthouse, the good doctor has gone and you arrive just in time to see some mutant-humanoid-thing kidnap his daughter. Following this creature into a different world, you need to solve puzzles to save the little girl and her father. Sierra definitely deserves some



credit for coming up with a unique—albeit bizarre—plot.

The demo that I sampled didn't really show off too much of what the game will offer, so it's hard to say exactly how this title will distinguish itself from *Myst*. Optimistically, we can hope that Sierra will endow this title with completely

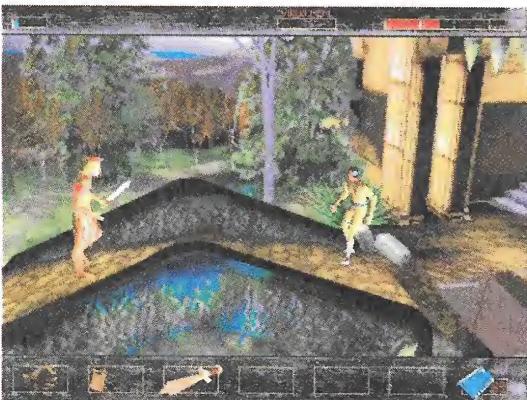


Like a great man once said, "Zoinks!"

unique puzzles and a cool, easy-to-use interface. Pessimistically, we can expect a *Myst*-clone. I like to be optimistic, though, so I have my fingers crossed.

Time Commando

System: IBM PC CD
Genre: action/adventure
Publisher: Activision
Developer: Adeline
Available: June '96

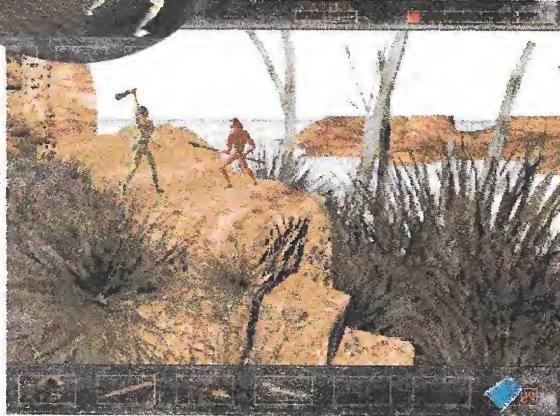


Of all the things I see in my crystal ball (well, it's actually a dirty beer mug), *Time Commando* is one of the most interesting. This one is being developed by Frederick Raynal and Serge Plagnol—the now-legendary team behind the classic

Alone in the Dark. Their newest offering looks to be as much of an advancement for computer gaming as *AID* was all those years ago. *TC* puts you in the shoes of a computer virus exterminator of the not-too-distant-future (hey, just like *Planet of the Apes*!). Your mission is to exterminate a virus (surprise, surprise) that is running rampant in the memory of a military computer. What seems like a simple objective is made more difficult by the infected computer's penchant for generating virtual time travel. It sticks you in nine different eras, each divided into two levels. Your quest is to retrieve blue memory chips; the more memory you steal from

the virus, the closer you get to destroying it. Keep in mind, though, that the clock is ticking, and if you take too long, the virus will take over, and you'll be destroyed. Very nice gameplay augments this interesting plot. Along the way, you need to take weapons from fallen foes and learn how to use them to advance. Though you need to play strategically so you don't run out of time, the fighting sequences will require some twitch-playing. In short, *TC* will have something for everyone.

The graphic punch of *TC*, even at this incomplete stage, is nothing short of breathtaking. Using a unique proprietary engine, Raynal and



Normality

How many *Doom*-clones have you seen in the last year? A million? Well, make it a million and one. *Normality*, however, manages to distinguish itself from its feeble brethren by providing a unique and entertaining twist on this established game engine. Instead of fighting your way out of hell or battling the Empire, *Normality* pits you against the forces of mediocrity. You play a down-on-his-luck, recently-released ex-con in the city of Neutropolis. Your simple objective is to find and destroy the elements in the city that are sucking the life out of its inhabitants. Your task won't be easy, though; from the very start, your quest is



his cohorts were able to integrate pre-rendered backgrounds and 3-D, real-time characters. You're saying to yourself, "What the hell does that mean?" Allow me to explain. Your playing environment looks as detailed and as realistic as, let's say, the backgrounds in *Myst*. The only catch is that it scrolls with your character's movement. Stanley—your alter ego in the game—looks just as realistic, thanks to some pretty powerful



3-D-rendering tools. The revolutionary thing about Stanley is that he's rendered in real-time, and that means you can alter his animations on the fly, e.g., in mid-animation, you can make him kick, run, etc. Imagine watching Bugs Bunny and being able to control every frame of animation in the cartoon, and you've got the idea.

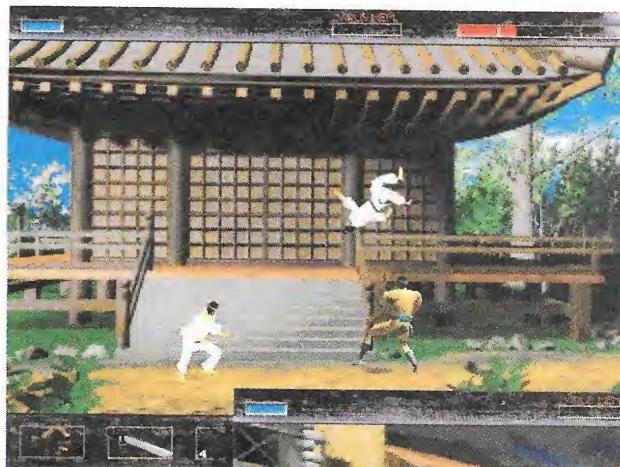
I make it a rule not to get too worked up over games that are still in development; my experience



Your apartment—complete with lava lamp.

thwarted by "Norm Troopers" posted at your front door. You can probably tell that this is going to be one *Doom*-clone with a sense of humor.

It's too early to say whether this game will succeed in doing something completely fresh with the *Doom* engine, but the prognosis is good. There's a lot of 3-D rendering in characters and backgrounds, as well as some pretty nicely done texture maps. Also, the game promises to be huge, with over 120 locations to explore. The deciding factor will be how far Gremlin can take the humorous potential of the scenario. With so many graphically rich games around, *Normality* needs to set itself apart as a title with good looks and good gameplay. Keep your eyes peeled for a full review.



has demonstrated that, more often than not, I'm disappointed. I'm breaking that rule with *TC*. I was blown away by what I saw on the incomplete version. Knowing Raynal's track record, it's a safe bet to assume that *TC* will only get better by the time it's complete. I can't wait.



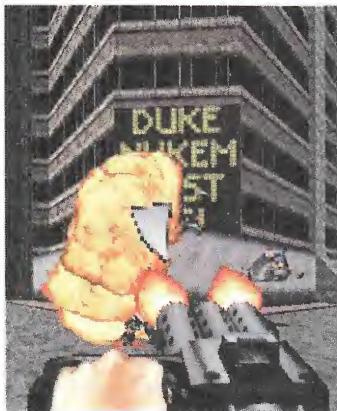
Check out the texture maps on these characters.

System: IBM PC CD
Genre: action/adventure
Publisher: Interplay
Developer: Gremlin Interactive
Available: July '96

Duke Nukem 3D

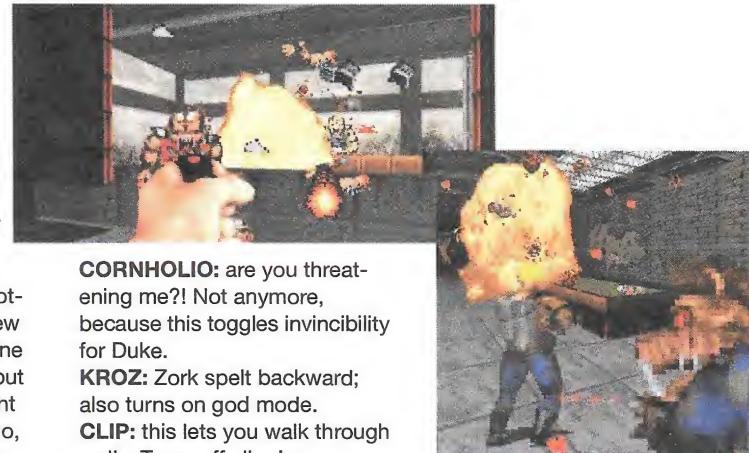
3DRealms for IBM PC

Shareware Cheat Codes



You taught the alien invaders the reality of physics through your high-velocity chain-gun. You got up close and personal with the pig cops, sharing a few point-blank shotgun shells with them. You blew up buildings, sank a submarine and even wasted a rocket—but now you're stuck. You thought you were as good as your ego, but you've met your match in the boss at the end of *Duke Nukem 3D's* shareware release. Spewing forth bullets, letting loose with bouncing grenades—making a fairly miserable day for Duke overall—this beast of burden is blowing your butt off the planet again and again. But being a Duke means being prepared, and being prepared means having backup. And Duke's got cheats.

To use any of the following codes, you must first enter DN, then the code. For example, to turn on God Mode, you would simply type in DNKROZ.



CORNHOLIO: are you threatening me? Not anymore, because this toggles invincibility for Duke.

KROZ: Zork spelt backward; also turns on god mode.

CLIP: this lets you walk through walls. Turns off clipping.

STUFF: gives you all the weapons with a full load of ammo.

SCOTTYxy: warp to a level where x is the episode and y represents the level number (1-6). Note: shareware version has only one episode.

ITEMS: gives you all of the items and key-cards.

VIEW: gives a unique chase-Duke view.

RATE: displays the frame rate.

SKILL#: changes the skill level (1 is easiest; 4 is hardest).

CASHMAN: share a little money for high-quality entertainment by hitting the spacebar.

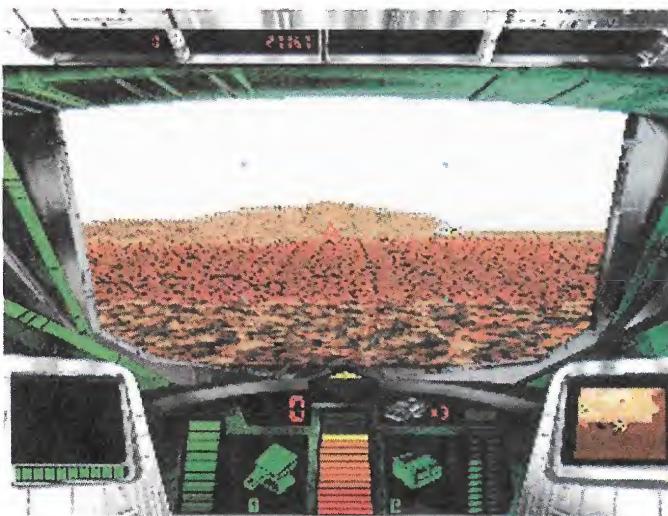


Havoc

Reality Bytes for Windows 95/Macintosh

Cheat Codes

They say war is hell. But in the metal-ripping, fiery post-apocalyptic future war, it all



boils down to one thing: *Havoc*. In this wild war, from the blazing bullets, missiles and lasers, death comes in many forms.

Whether you're getting blown away by ground or air vehicles, or the bosses are walking all over your remains, you can always turn to your secret option: cheats. While playing *Havoc*, pause the game, then enter any of the following cheat codes to activate the effect you want.

AAA: running out of ammo? Turn to the triple A, which delivers ammo, ammo and yes, more ammo!

SSS: if it seems that you always step into the enemy's line of fire, use this code to replenish your shields.

MMM: gives you a valuable heatseeker launch that will have your enemies seeking cover.

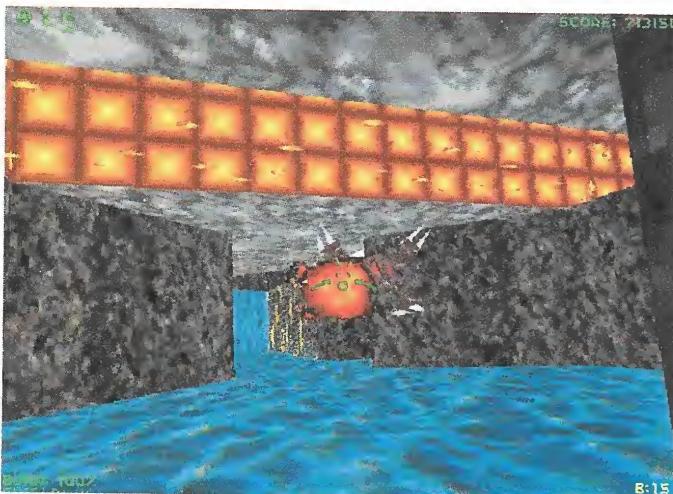
VVV: losing your vehicles faster than you can even type SSS?! Well, then, you can enter VVV a little faster and obtain an extra vehicle.

If you want to bypass a level entirely, at the **Pick Your Vehicle** screen, type **CHEAT**. Then enter the world number (1-6), followed by the level number (1-5, 3 being bonus, and 5 being the boss). Before you can say, "Maybe I'm not ready," you'll find yourself thrust into the level you want. And remember: when in doubt, pull the trigger.

Descent II

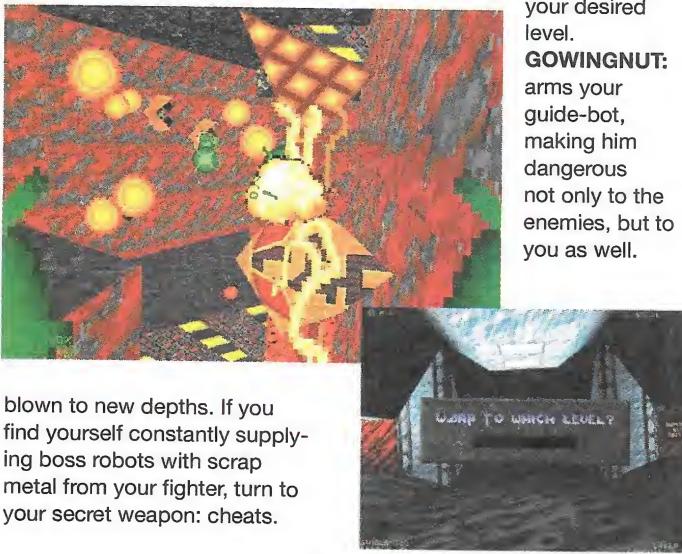
Parallax/Interplay for IBM PC

Cheat Codes



Water shimmers over your Pyro fighter as you carefully pass through the waterfall. Low on energy, you switch to the gauss cannon only to find you have just a few hundred rounds left. Pitch-black darkness inhibits your view as you advance cautiously, the cascading falls behind you offering a relaxing but deceptive backdrop. Hesitating momentarily, you briefly flick on the floodlights to look for nearby exits. The sound of water is completely drowned when dozens of robots unleash their firepower into you. As the pieces of your Pyro float downstream, you wonder whether turning on the floodlight was such a hot idea.

In *Descent II*, the battle between human and machine is



blown to new depths. If you find yourself constantly supplying boss robots with scrap metal from your fighter, turn to your secret weapon: cheats.

The following cheat codes are for the full-registered version of *Descent II* and can be activated at any time during gameplay.

ALMIGHTY: call on the divine and you will become immortal.
LPNLIZARD: are you such a horrendous shot that you can't even hit a wall, let alone an enemy robot? If you are, don't tell anyone, and use this code to convert your guns into lethal homing weapons.

ALIFALAFEL: supplies your fighter with full accessories, such as the afterburner and floodlights.

SPANIARD: entering this once will wipe out all the robots in an area. Using it twice blows up a nearby boss and your guide-bot.

FREESPACE: lets you warp to your desired level.

GOWINGNUT: arms your guide-bot, making him dangerous not only to the enemies, but to you as well.

GODZILLA: feel like ramming opponents to destroy them? Now you can.

BITTERSWEET: the walls become psychedelic.

GABBAGABBAHEY: look familiar? Enter this code if you think you're the hottest pilot this side of Pluto. You'll soon be the deadliest pilot this side of anywhere.

PIGFARMER: enter this code and downsize your playing screen.

The next codes are only for the shareware *Descent II* demo. They will not work in the full version.



ZINGERMANS: god mode.

MOTHERLODE: full guns.

ALIFALAFEL: accessories.

EATANGELOS: homing weapons.

CURRYGOAT: all keys.

ERICAANNE: turns all of your weapons into bouncing nightmares—ricochet city.

WHAMMA-ZOOM: level warp.

JOSHUAAKIRA: brings up the full level map. Now all you have to do is make sense of it.



CHEAT MODE

BattleBeast

7th Level for IBM PC

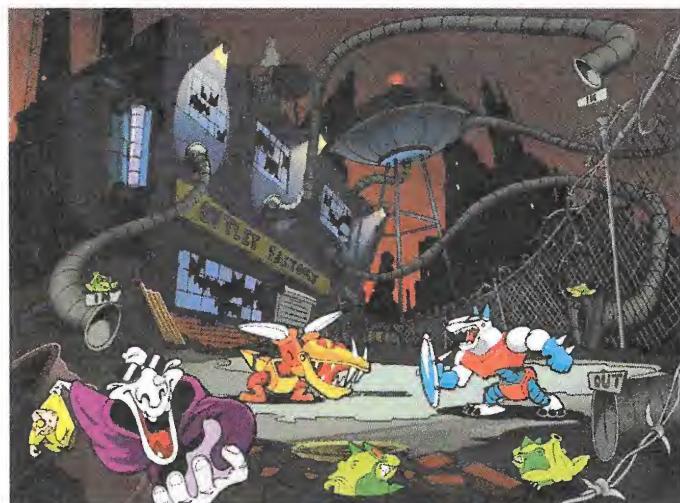
Cheat Codes



Listen up, dogmeat! They tell me you've been getting your tail whipped not only by frogs, but also by mere tadpoles. I bet you can't even get up the nerve to chase the postman. Don't let me catch you putting your tail between your legs, though, or it's off to the pound for you. I've

got some new treats for you, and they'll help you defeat the twisted Toadman and his slimy henchmen. Before you can use any of these cheat codes, you'll have to enter the

master cheat code. When the screen is at the order form (where the six battles surround the general and an American flag), type **YOYOYO**. This will bring up a cheat window in



which you can enter any of *Battle Beast's* cheat codes.

NHAENRH1: unlimited ammo for player one.

NHAENRH2: unlimited ammo for—you guessed it—player two.

ERHYHRLY: helps you deliver the final biting blow to defeat the otherwise impossible Toadman by weakening him considerably.

OFOVH: tired of having to rush through the bonus rooms? Then enter this code and effectively double your allowed time to loot the bonus rooms.

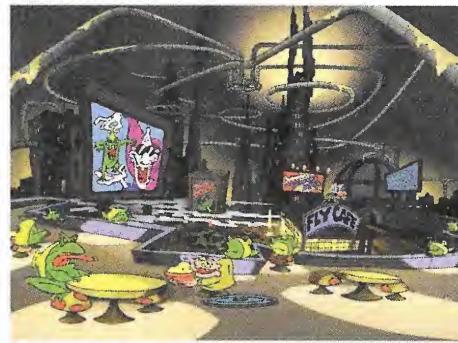
OIVNNFOF: eliminates the need to fight the pesky tadpoles.

OAOAEIOA: take to flight immediately when entering the lab through this code.

ITIHFO: changes the fight format to the best two-out-of-three rounds.

ERHNE: lets you take on different opponents.

ORUFO: grants invincibility in the bonus rooms.



Microsoft Flight Simulator 5.0

Microsoft for IBM PC

Aircraft Editor



Flight enthusiasts will definitely want to fly with a handy, intuitive aircraft editor available on

AIRMOD allows you to easily alter the engine power and speed, overall thrust, fuel capacity, control surfaces, maneuvering capabilities and more. Heck, you can even give your plane a different paint job.

On America Online, Go PC GAMES, click on the Software Library, and download **AIRMOD22.ZIP**. After downloading it, **uncompress**

AIRMOD22.ZIP into your aircraft directory for *Microsoft Flight Simulator 5.0*. Now just type **AIRMOD** and hit **enter** and you're ready to add a personalized touch to your planes.

America Online for *Microsoft Flight Simulator 5.0*. If you've always wanted to take your own creativity into modifying planes, or you simply want a bigger fuel tank for longer flights, **AIRMOD22.ZIP** lets you customize your aircraft completely.

Strife

Rogue Software for IBM PC

Cheat Codes

In a world ruled by Order, dissension is sometimes necessary—especially when the quasi-military group known as Order is corrupt, lawless and merciless. But freedom has its price—specifically in arming yourself to overcome Order and its minions.

You've stared dreamily at the bigger guns in the armory. Now you can own them through a few taps of the keyboard. Here are the cheats that can be entered at any time during gameplay.

STUFF: a full-featured code that gives you invincibility, plus all weapons and keys. And if you act now, they'll even throw



in a teleporter beacon.

GUNS: although the code is tricky, would you believe it gives you all the guns?

OPEN: all keys are put into your inventory, ready to open new doors to action.

SPIRIT: no clipping mode is activated; this allows you to

pass through walls.

MONEY: gives you extra moola to help you equip yourself properly.

TIC: the DevParm toggle.



Whiplash

Interplay for IBM PC

Invincibility, secret cars and more



You're neck-and-neck with your leading opponent, tearing down the curved hallway. Up ahead, there's a vertical loop, so you gun the accelerator. As you approach the loop, your opponent swings in front of you, cutting your speed off. You slam the brakes, drastically reducing your speed. Looking out your window, you can't help but think how funny things look when the landscape is upside-down—until you fall five stories.

Whether you need help with your racing or you want to look at some new killer cars to take around the *Whiplash* circuit, a variety of cheats awaits. To **activate** any of the following **cheats**, enter their respective **codes** as your **name** before a race. For example, if you want

a secret car, when it asks for your name, type **LOVEBUN**.

LOVEBUN: gives you the infamous lovebun car; great for dates.

MAYTE: another secret car to blaze in.

TINKLE: a third secret car.

SUICYCO: a suicidally fast secret car.



2X4B523P: as the name implies...OK, maybe not, but it's another secret car.

FORMULA 1: access the secondary cars.

SUPERMAN: are the roads too safe? Enter this code for destruction mode.

DR DEATH: human cars

become invincible.

GOLDBOY: premier cup.

MREPRISE: bonus cup.

CUP WON: see end sequence.

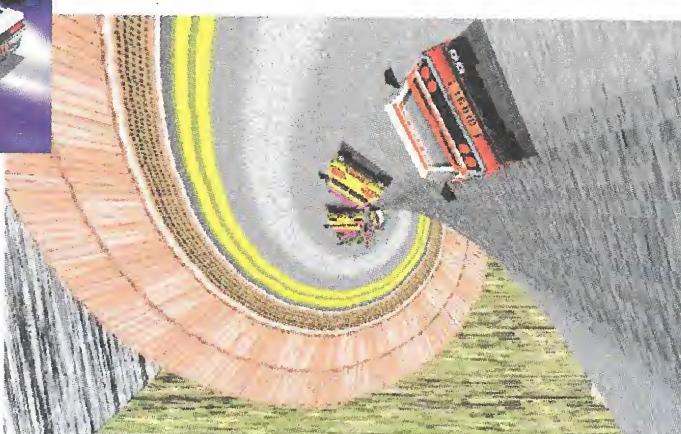
I WON: if you can't win by racing, enter this code to see a race won.

ROLL EM: shows credits for whiplash.

DUEL: you're chased by an angry truck driver—not really, but it does give you a killer opponent.

TOPTUNES: alternative sounds.

CINEMA: gives a nice widescreen view.



1996

Computer Game

What happens when you put thousands of game programmers, musicians, artists, designers and writers together under one roof?

If you happened to be in Santa Clara, CA, from March 30 to April 3, you'd be witnessing one of the computer-gaming industry's most hallowed events: the Computer Game Developers' Conference (CGDC), held annually since 1986. In years past, the CGDC was a folksy and homespun affair—a place where the pocket protector set could sit down and discuss the nuts and bolts of game design without being distracted by meddlesome interlopers from public relations, marketing, management, or—worst of all—the pesky fourth estate.

While it wouldn't be fair to say that today's CGDC has "gone corporate," the freewheeling days of yesteryear are gradually being supplanted by the increasing size and scope of the burgeoning computer-game industry. At the most recent CGDC, Hollywood producers mingled with grizzled game industry veterans, working to change the dynamics of the conference; at times, I felt there were more marketing types, corporate executives and venture capitalists present than there were programmers.

But one can forgive the CGDC for some of this newfound glitz and glamour, because the computer-gaming industry has finally hit the big time. The computer-gaming hobby is exploding, and game publishers are desperate for high-quality artists, programmers and game designers to crank out the next generation of interactive entertainment. More than once, I saw a be-suited human resources person brandish a piece of cardboard emblazoned with a message such as, "Wanted: Experienced 3-D Graphic Artist -\$100K." The annual CGDC job fair was essentially a meat market for talent, with game publishers chasing developers much like NCAA recruiters rush to sign that 7-foot-tall forward.

Even with all these new influences, the show was primarily about game developers and game technology. One of the show's hallmarks is the ample number of seminars, tutorials and round tables that allow game developers to exchange ideas, argue critical issues and generally set the stage for the coming year in game development. Several new game technologies were introduced, ranging from an influx of 3-D accelerator cards to the ascension of Windows 95 as the game operating system of choice.

GAMES GO 3-D

Easily the single strongest element at the show was the surge in development and awareness of 3-D graphic accelerator cards. Products such as ATI's 3D Rage, Creative Labs 3D Blaster, Diamond Multimedia's Edge 3D, NEC's PCX1

by Jeff James

graphics processor and Rendition's Verité chip all promise to usher in a new era of graphics and animation capability on the PC. Microsoft was pushing the Direct3D elements of the Windows 95 game software development kit (SDK) as the best way to utilize the special hardware features of these new cards.

What Does This Mean for the Gamer?

New 3-D accelerator cards will give computer games even more incredible animation and graphics capability. It's still too early to pick out a single standard, but it looks like 1997 is shaping up to be the year that the industry—and by extension, computer gamers—will be flocking to these cards in droves.

ONLINE MANIA

Now that single-player games are becoming passé, game developers and publishers are realizing that online and multiplayer gaming is where a great deal of the future growth lies. The Total Entertainment Network (TEN) (<http://www.ten.net>) showcased their new online game network at the CGDC, demonstrating *Duke Nukem 3D* being played between gamers scattered across the United States—all over the Internet via TEN.

Speaking of online gaming, representatives from several new online computer game magazines were seen prowling the show floor, including CNET's Game Center (<http://www.cnet.com/Gamecenter>), the Gamespot (<http://www.gamespot.com>) and the Happy Puppy Games Onramp (<http://www.happypuppy.com>). Reports of the demise of printed game magazines because of the onset of these new digital pubs are a bit premature (to say the least—I'll be the first to sign up as soon as I can read an online mag without lugging around a laptop and a bag of extra batteries), but the new activity and excitement in this emerging market is hard to dispute.

What Does This Mean for the Gamer?

Multiplayer and modem play is the next "big thing" in computer gaming. If you don't have at least a 28.8kbps modem attached to your computer, you'll be missing out on all the fun.

NEW GAME GADGETS

There were other new gadgets and technology discussed at the show, ranging from video compression technology to new processor models. Since the CGDC is first and foremost a conference for developers, most of the tools and technology demonstrated were geared toward a technically savvy audience.

Some of the technology that will have a major impact on the way games are developed included video compression by the Duck Corporation (<http://www.duck.com>).

Developers' Conference

Duck was showcasing their TrueMotion video compression algorithms and their Comprehending technology, both of which allow game developers to insert cleaner, more polished digitized video into their games. Intel (<http://www.intel.com>) announced their new MMX technology, which revolves around new Pentium processors optimized for use with the next generation of multimedia hardware and software.

Apple Computer (<http://www.apple.com>) finally threw its hat into the game development ring by announcing Apple Game Sprockets—a software development kit that gives Mac game developers some long-needed support. Using Game Sprockets, developers can now more easily add Internet support, advanced 3-D graphics, speech recognition and other goodies to their new Mac game products.

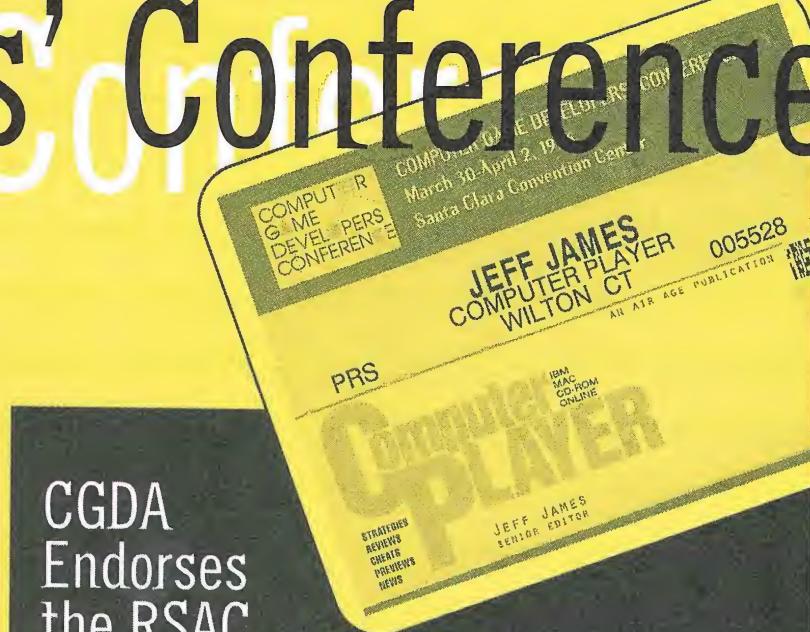
The biggest event of the show was arguably Microsoft's Pax Romana—a massive party held at San Jose State University. Behind the togas, faux Roman attire and the slave auction (which ruffled the feathers of a few politically correct attendees), Microsoft had a single message: DirectX. DirectX is Microsoft's strategy to make programming Windows 95 games as easy as shooting fish in a barrel, and it features such technologies as: Direct3D (which standardizes support for 3D graphics accelerator cards); DirectDraw 2.0; and DirectPlay 2.0 (which simplifies Internet support for games). Despite grumbling by some game developers about Microsoft's impending entrance into the game market, DirectX should help make Windows 95 the most popular game development environment in coming years.

What Does It All Mean?

All of these new game technologies will eventually work their way into your favorite computer games. Apple's Game Sprockets will generate some new interest and excitement for the Macintosh as a game platform, while developments such as Microsoft's DirectX, Intel's MMX technology and the Duck's video compression tools will make it easier for PC game developers to up the ante in game design, offering richer and more enjoyable game worlds than ever before.

CGDA Developer Spotlight Awards

The Computer Game Developers' Association (CGDA) honored several of the year's best computer games in an award show held at the developers' conference. According to the CGDA, the games selected were "ten products that we felt contained outstanding technical or creative contributions to the field of computer gaming." The games were awarded in no particular order or in any specific category, causing one wag who attended the show to comment that the CGDA was having too much trouble pigeon-holing the games into their respective genres. Regardless, the developers of each of the games listed below walked home with a developer spotlight trophy, complete with working lightbulb.



CGDA Endorses the RSAC Game-Rating System

Parents shopping for kid-friendly computer games are undoubtedly concerned about the adult content in the games they're buying. With new game releases such as *Ripper* (Take 2 Interactive), *Phantasmagoria* (Sierra) and *Duke Nukem 3D* (3D Realms) featuring substantial amounts of adult content, the time-worn cliché that computer games are "just for kids" has never been further from the truth.

To fill the demand for an objective computer game rating system, two organizations have been battling it out for supremacy in the game market: the Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB) and the Recreational Software Advisory Committee (RSAC). The struggle may be decided soon, thanks in part to the endorsement of the RSAC system by the Computer Game Developers' Association (CGDA).

According to RSAC Executive Director Stephen Balkam, the RSAC rating system is superior to any other method used to judge computer game content. "Unlike movie ratings—which have just one letter grade and no explanation of how it was derived—the RSAC label

describes the product in three ways and gives the level of intensity plus brief descriptors in each one," says Balkam. "This gives parents a much better idea of what they're buying."

For more information contact the RSAC at: Recreational Software Advisory Council (RSAC), 2067 Massachusetts Ave., Fourth Floor, Cambridge, MA 02140; 617.864.5612; fax 617.864.5740.

RSAC ADVISORY	
	VIOLENCE Humans killed
	NUDITY/SEX Partial nudity
	LANGUAGE Mild expletives

- *Command & Conquer* (Westwood Studios)
- *Crusader: No Remorse* (Origin Systems)
- *Duke Nukem 3D* (3D Realms)
- *Full Throttle* (LucasArts)
- *Hexen* (Raven Software)
- *MechWarrior 2* (Activision)
- *Steel Panthers* (Strategic Simulations, Inc.)
- *Stonekeep* (Interplay)
- *Warcraft II* (Blizzard Entertainment)
- *You Don't Know Jack* (Berkeley Systems/Jellyvision) CP

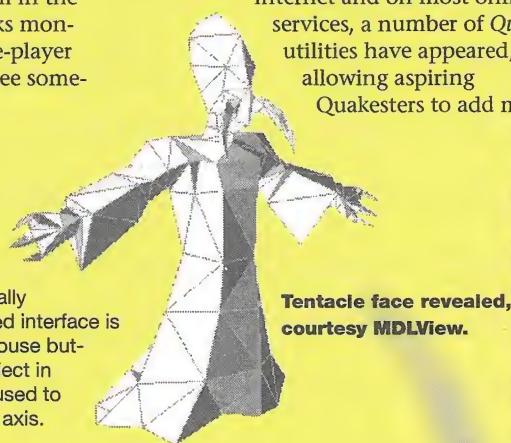
hacking the **QUAKE**test adding maps and monsters

by Jeff James

Although the final release of Quake is still months away, Id Software has released what they call a "...public test version of Quake's network, sound and video technology." This "public test" was designed to let players experiment with Quake's multiplayer subsystem and flush out any bugs still in the software. Unfortunately, it lacks monsters (so it's a yawner for single-player gaming) and only includes three somewhat limited levels.

MDLView v1.0 (mdlview.zip)

MDLView v1.0 allows you to view some of the raw polygon graphic data contained in the Quake MDL files. It doesn't really do much, but the mouse-controlled interface is a marvel: holding down the left mouse button zooms the current graphic object in and out, while the right button is used to rotate the object around a central axis.



Monster Test Maps (quakemon.zip)



Blast away at this bloody Sasquatch...

Unpack v1.01 (unpk.zip)

If you want to fully utilize the program MDLView, you'll have to get Unpack v1.01. Copy this program to the Quake directory, unzip the archive then type **unpack** and hit return. Unpack will extract all the data from the ID1.pak file, allowing you to examine and manipulate its contents with your favorite Quake utility program.



...or finish off enemy knights—all thanks to these Quake hacks.



...blow holes in this ogre...

Death Map (death.zip)

This map modifies the third Quake test level. It scatters a variety of monsters throughout, but the most impressive critters are undoubtedly the fish: jump into the water to see them swimming around. This map is used much like those described above. Copy the contents of the archive to your C:\QUAKEMAPS directory, start Quake, answer **yes** to the license agreement, then type **map death** and hit return to get started.

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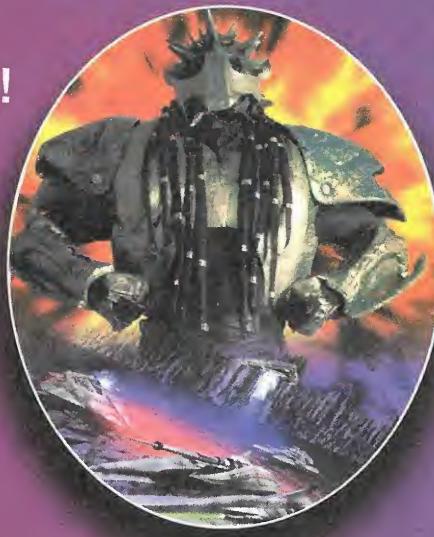


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Children's

by Glenn Broderick

Kids between the ages of four and 11 are not an easy audience to entertain with computer software; many of you who have young children can attest to this. When setting out to make a game for children, the software developer is faced with several seemingly insurmountable obstacles. **First and probably most significant, is the issue of attention span.** Anything that competes for a child's attention needs to make a convincing argument within a minute; if you haven't caught the child's attention within that time, you've lost him or her to some other activity. **One must also consider the active imaginations** brewing in these kids' heads. Games that play off these imaginations stand a better chance of grabbing that all-important attention. **Inexperience is another significant factor;** these kids haven't been exposed to many intricate aspects of gaming. These lessons have been hard to learn for the people who make children's software, and the evolution of their offerings demonstrates a growing understanding of their consumers' desires. This understanding makes buying games for the young people in your life a little less of a crapshoot.

When you want "God Mode" in *Doom*, you know just which keys to press; you know just what the game expects you to do to get a desired reaction. Kids don't have it so easy. At four or five, kids just haven't experienced enough to understand those interactions with the computer. Games made for them need to take this lack of experience into consideration. This means a couple of things. First, there can't be "multipurpose" buttons or keys. Each button should do only one thing. Second, movement and actions should be intuitive. A child shouldn't have to press the down arrow to move his or her spaceship up. A



good example of a simple, intuitive interface is found in Powerhouse Entertainment's *Chess Kids*. The icons for setting options such as chessboard environment and music are clearly and logically marked. Moving your player is just as sim-

ple: position your cursor on top of the piece you wish to move, click the mouse button, and the squares to which you could possibly move are highlighted; release the mouse button over the square you want to move to, and that's it. Your turn's done. There is very little—in terms of gameplay—to discourage a brand-new gamer from picking this up. This solid interface is sure to prevent young players from leaving their computers in frustration.

EYE-CATCHING GRAPHICS

OK; you now have a game with a decent interface: a five-year-old doesn't need any special training to operate it. It's time to consider that painfully short attention span. An easy interface alone won't keep them at the computer, but eye-popping graphics might help. The 3-D-rendered backgrounds and fluidly animated 2-D foregrounds that hooked you into games such as *Myst* and *Dark Forces* can do the same for kids. Those images and animations simply need to be adjusted to fit with the motif of a children's game. Who says that Mother Goose's living room can't be filled with



3-D-rendered furniture? Humongous' *Putt-Putt* franchise comes to mind when discussing graphics such as these. The bright colors of the objects on screen and the attention to minute detail in the backgrounds of these games can really catch a child's attention—not to mention an adult's. Graphics such as those in *Putt-Putt* are helping to up the ante for would-be children's software developers.

HOW ABOUT PLOT DEVELOPMENT?

We're moving right along. We have a solid interface that isn't too hard to use, and we have graphics that will just about glue a child to the screen for that all-important first minute of gameplay. So, now what? You can't start off strong and then just taper off. The intensity created during the first minute of the game has to be sustained. Putting pretty pictures on the screen is just the beginning. What can be done with those pictures? What is the point of manipulating those objects? Like a good story, a good game has to have an interesting plot to make gameplay genuinely fun. Plot development needs to be quick: if a child has to play for more than a minute or two to move the plot along, the computer will be turned off.

Software

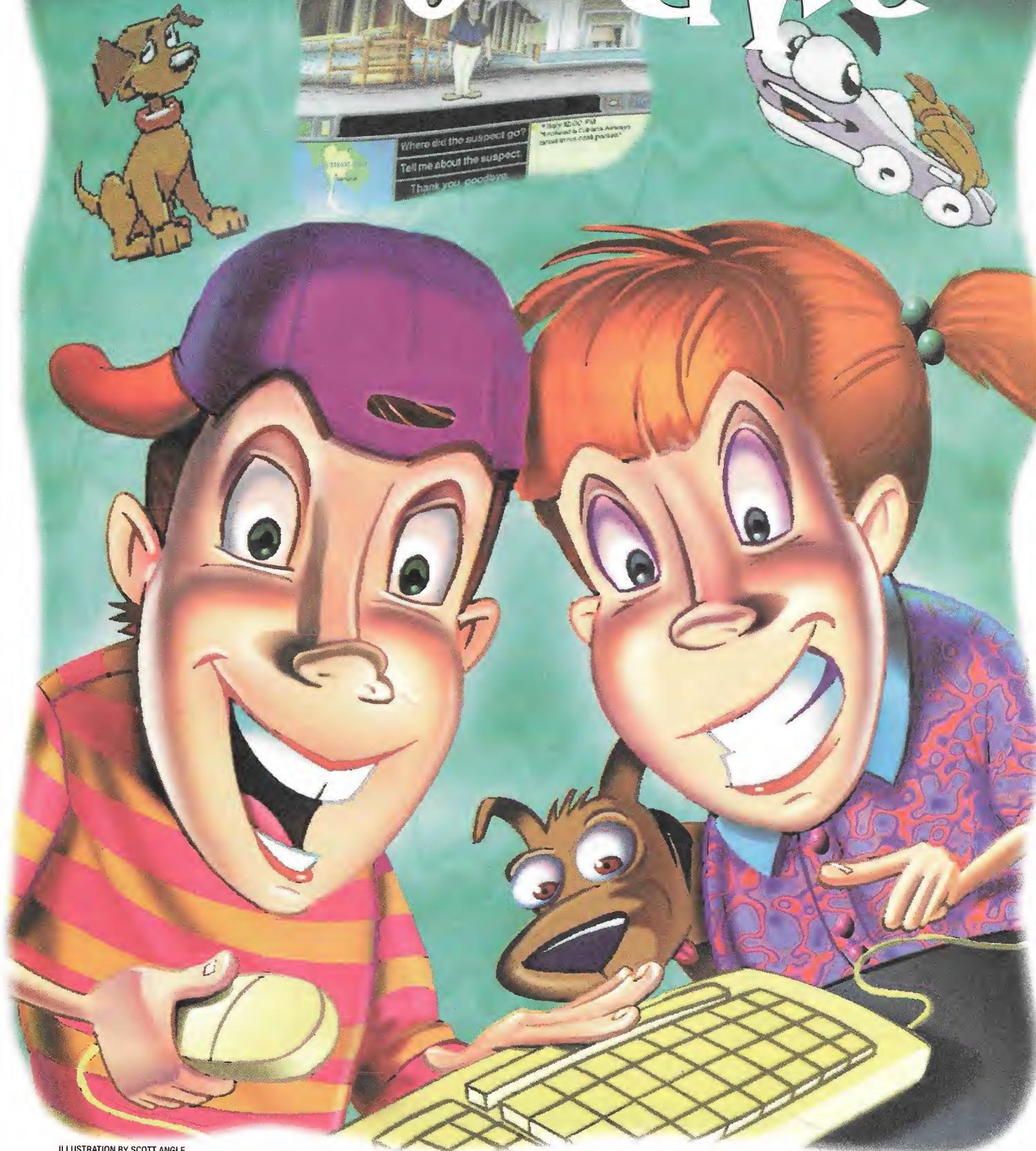


ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT ANGLE

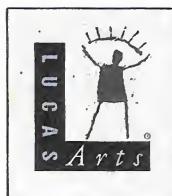
THE PLAYERS IN KIDS ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE

Powerhouse Entertainment

Powerhouse's Chess Kids is a shining example of a high-quality interface for a children's game. In addition, they have plans to release live-action "Moviegames" based on *Pinocchio* and *The Jungle Book* for IBM. Powerhouse Entertainment, 14850 Quorum Dr., Ste. 200, Dallas, TX 75240; 214.233.5400. e-mail: pwrhseent@aol.com



LucasArts



Mortimer and the Riddle of the Medallions promises to be one of the best kids' games ever created. LucasArts' commitment to the field of children's software is up in the

air, however, and what lies beyond *Mortimer* is a big question mark. Maybe we'll see more for children from Lucas's newly formed LucasLearning division. LucasArts, P.O. Box 10307, San Rafael, CA 94912; 415.721.3300.

Website: <http://www.lucasarts.com>

Brøderbund

Brøderbund is a huge player in the kids' software business. Their *Carmen Sandiego* series is one of the most successful kids' games of all time. This is a volatile market, however, and yesterday's stars are today's scars; they need to keep their ideas fresh to compete.

Brøderbund, 500 Redwood Blvd., P.O. Box 6121, Novato, CA 94948-6121; 415.382.4567. Website: <http://www.brøderbund.com>



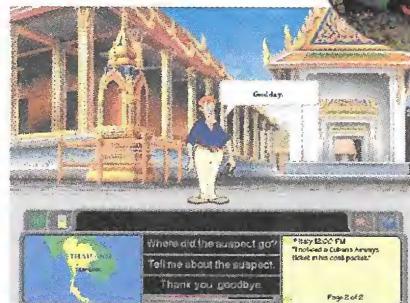
Humongous Entertainment

Putt-Putt is to computers what Barney is to TV. New characters such as Fatty Bear and Freddy Fish are shaping up to follow in *Putt-Putt's* footsteps (or should I say tread marks?). This crew could wind up as the digital equivalent of "Sesame Street."

Humongous Entertainment, 16932 Woodinville-Redmond Rd. NE, Ste. 204, Woodinville, WA 98072; 206.487.1079. Website: <http://www.humongous.com>



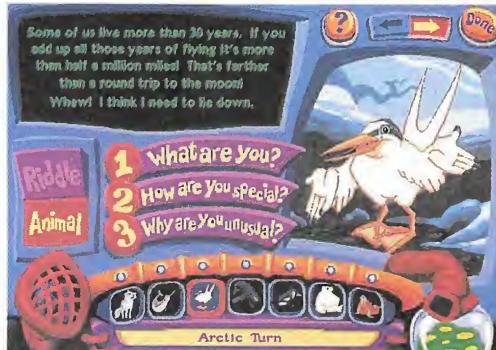
The *Carmen Sandiego* franchise by Brøderbund is a very good example of attention to the importance of



plot. The point of the game is very simple: find Carmen Sandiego using geographic clues that she's left at the scenes of her crimes. The player is given constant reminders of how close he or she is to solving the crime and finding Carmen. A simple objective, complemented by a steady stream of progress reports, provides the player with enough motivation to continue playing and, possibly, to complete the game.

AND THEN THERE IS MORTIMER

We've established that a kids' game has to have an intuitive interface, outstanding graphics and compelling gameplay.



Finding a game that has these three essential components is a tough task. LucasArts hopes to remedy this with one of its upcoming offerings. *Mortimer and the Riddle of the Medallion*—the company's first foray into the realm of kids' games—casts players as Sally or Sid, two young neighbors and friends. A beautifully animated and detailed introduction provides the player with simple, yet compelling, exposition. Players assume the role of Sally or Sid in an effort to regain the broken pieces of a magic medallion belonging to a Dr. Laslow. Revitalizing petrified animals and then solving riddles about them are the only ways to collect these pieces of the medallion from the evil Lodius. The graphics in *Mortimer* are, without question, some of the finest ever to grace a children's game. The introductory

sequence is beautifully animated, and gameplay comprises stunning 3-D backgrounds and expertly animated 2-D characters.

The interface couldn't be much easier. Using a mouse or joystick, the player moves Mortimer's crosshair to the desired target and left-clicks to shoot. Puzzle solving is just as intuitive. Last and most significant, this game is fun to play. In a dramatic departure from the unwritten standard in children's games, LucasArts has provided the game with an engine based on another game: *Rebel Assault II*. Replace the X-Wing with a big snail, tweak the control a little bit, and imagine flying over earthly terrain instead of through space, and you've got the idea. Planned for release in the Spring of 1996, *Mortimer and the Riddle of the Medallion* could redefine and heighten our expectations of software purchased for children.

As a whole, the video-game industry is growing up and, as we all know, reaching maturity is never a pleasant or painless process (remember junior high school dances?). Software manufacturers have come to the realization that their audience is becoming more discriminating, more critical and much more demanding. Providing kids with an easy interface, good graphics and compelling gameplay is now



a necessity. Playing off those wild imaginations instead of trying to tame them is a defining characteristic of the next generation of kids' games. LucasArts' *Mortimer and the Riddle of the Medallion* is the next step in the maturation of the children's software business (sounds like an oxymoron, doesn't it?). What lies beyond is anyone's guess, but one thing is for sure: you can now reasonably expect to see some really fun games in the kids' section of your local software retailer. CP



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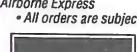
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Strategy Guide

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MINDSCAPE FOR IBM PC CD

WARHAMMER

Consider yourself forewarned: Mindscape's Warhammer: Shadow of the Horned Rat (SOTHR) isn't your run-of-the-mill real-time strategy game. If you vanquished GDI and NOD forces in Command & Conquer with a sneer and pummeled both orcs and humans alike in Warcraft II, you're in for a rude awakening when you dig into SOTHR. Most of the missions are challenging, some are difficult, and a few are nigh impossible to complete—especially if you aren't mindful of the extra combat variables that SOTHR uses to resolve combat.

Enter this strategy guide, which will help you best orcs, skaven and other malcontents with aplomb. First, here are a few pointers about how this guide is organized. Missions are listed in this way: Mission Name (initial mission payment/final mission payment). Units introduced in a mission will be listed with their unit strengths, i.e., Goblin Stickers (20/20), and printed in boldface, while spells and psychological effects will be italicized.



Mission 1

PROTECT SCHNAPPLEBURG (100/400)

After you've accepted this mission, be sure to select both the Grudgebringer Cavalry and the Grudgebringer Infantry on the regiment selection screen. During the deployment phase for this mission, you'll see a regiment of Goblin Stickers (20/20)

Shadow of the Horned Rat

by Jeff James

MEDIEVAL



the goblins as you can. You may be tempted to position your cavalry next to the infantry, but it's better to hold them in reserve for now; place them behind the trees in the center of the town, hidden from view. When your two regiments have been deployed, click on the Start Battle button.

As soon as the action starts, order the Grudgebringer Infantry to engage the Goblin Stickers to the northeast. In a few minutes, a regiment of Goblin Wolfriders (12/12) will appear to the north; engage them with the Grudgebringer Cavalry, being sure

emerging from the forest northeast of Schnappleburg. To head off the goblins before they can enter the town, deploy your infantry on the road to the east, placing them as close to

position your cav-

alry next to the infantry, but it's better to hold them in reserve for now; place them behind the trees in the center of the town, hidden from view. When your two regiments have been deployed, click on the Start Battle button.

As soon as the action starts, order the Grudgebringer Infantry to engage the Goblin Stickers to the northeast. In a few minutes, a regiment of Goblin Wolfriders (12/12) will appear to the north; engage them with the Grudgebringer Cavalry, being sure

To keep your mercenaries alive and well-fed in the *Warhammer* gameworld, you'll need all the help you can get. What follows are a few general tactics, tips and pointers to help you vanquish your enemies and bring in maximum coinage.

KEEP YOUR TROOPS AT FULL STRENGTH

At the end of every mission, check the troop roster to hire all the troop replacements that are available.



USE MOVEMENT ORDERS DURING DEPLOYMENT

Use the deployment period to assign movement orders to some of your units. In large, fast-moving scenarios, moving quickly at the outset of a mission isn't a luxury; it's a race between life and death.

CAREFULLY READ EVERY BRIEFING

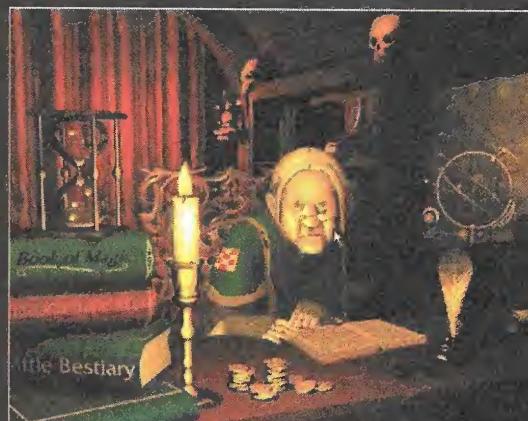
Mission briefings contain vital information about the next mission and the troops you're likely to face. Ignore this information at your peril.

LISTEN TO DIETRICH

Dietrich, your bookkeeper, will usually keep his nose buried in his accounting books. Occasionally, he'll have something important to say and will look directly at you. When he does so, click on him to make him spill the beans.

USE REAR AND FLANK ATTACKS

A unit attacked to the rear or flanks is much more likely to



panic and flee, allowing you to rout them easily. Pin down an enemy regiment with one unit, then attack from another direction with another.

DON'T RELY ON A FEW UNITS

You may be tempted to use your wizards and cavalry for all your dirty work; avoid this, if at all possible. The more you rely on a few units, the more experienced and effective they become, but at the cost of the rest of your units staying weak and unskilled. Spread the combat experience around to maximize the combat potential of all units.

USE UNIT PSYCHOLOGY TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

Many of the races of the *Warhammer* gameworld bitterly hate one another and will fight to the bitter end to slay their lifelong enemies. Dwarfs hate all orcs and goblins, while night goblins fear elves. Ramon Black's Black Avengers hate skaven, so they're very effective against all strains of ratmen.

For more tactics, see page 100 of the *Warhammer* instruction manual.

Strategy Guide



to use the Grudgebringer Sword to cast a fireball on the Wolfriders as you close in. After a few minutes of combat—and if luck is on your side—both

groups of goblins should break and rout, with your soldiers in hot pursuit. Kill or chase off all the goblins to end the mission.



MAGIC ITEM!

Behind a group of trees to the east of the town, a **Sword of Might** is hidden in the grass beside the road. To best use the new



weapon, make sure that your Grudgebringer Infantry is the regiment that finds it.



ANIMATED SEQUE

At the end of the Schnappleburg mission, you'll see the skaven Gray Seer Thanquol up to no good, creating a magical ax of great power for use against the Empire.

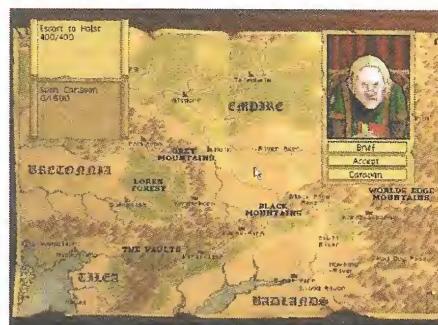


Mission 2

ESCORT TO HOLST (400/400)

After you've finished the Protect Schnappleburg mission, you'll be faced with two new mission options: Escort to Holst and Sven Carlsson. For now, select the Escort to Holst mission; you'll need the reinforcements that can only be obtained by accepting it.

Be sure to take both of your regiments with you on this mis-



sion. You'll face two ambushes by orcs: one will be sprung on you during the trip to Holst; you'll encounter the other on your return to Wissenheim.

• Ambush 1

As soon as this mission begins, you'll see a group of Goblin Stickers (10/10) far to the north; immediately order your Grudgebringer Cavalry to engage them. Move the Grudgebringer Infantry away from the caravan, positioning them to the north of the small copse of trees to their right. As soon as the infantry move to that location, a new group of Goblin Stickers

(8/8) will appear to the east; immediately engage them with your infantry.

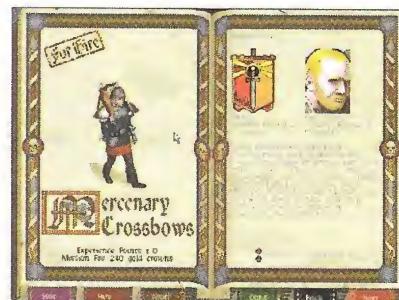
Your cavalry should make short work of the goblins to the north; after they've destroyed them, move the cavalry to the east to support the infantry. As your cavalry are moving across the map, a new regiment of Orc Boyz (9/9) will appear to the east, just to the north of your infantry. Ideally, your infantry will have finished off the goblins in time to charge this new regiment, and with luck, your cavalry will be able to attack from the west. Combined, your cavalry and infantry should quickly despatch the remaining orcs.



• Ambush 2

When you return to Wissenheim, you'll be ambushed again by four regiments of goblins. You'll see two regiments of Goblin Stickers (12/12) and (9/9) appear to the north; engage the larger unit with your Grudgebringer Cavalry, order the Grudgebringer Infantry to take the smaller one, and move your

Mercenary Crossbowmen to the north as soon as possible. At all costs, avoid getting your fighting units tangled up in the slower caravan.



When both your cavalry and infantry are engaged, another unit of Goblin Stickers (12/12) will emerge from the woods to the north. Your cavalry should be able to finish off the first unit of

goblins in time to charge this new unit. Finally, a fourth unit of Goblin Stickers (11/11) will appear to the far north; target them with your crossbowmen as soon as you spot them.



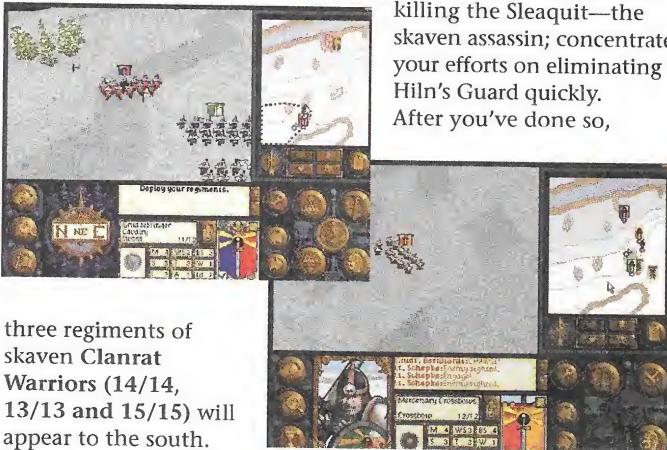
Hopefully, this latest group of goblins will take so much damage from missile fire that they'll turn tail and run. If they don't flee, keep firing at them until your cavalry and infantry can finish fighting their battles and come to the aid of the crossbowmen. On your return to Wissenheim, be sure to replace dead and wounded soldiers with fresh recruits.

Mission 3

SVEN CARLSSON (0/1500)

The next available mission is straightforward: capture the treacherous Otto Hiln, and destroy all the skaven in the area. Unfortunately, it's next to impossible to rescue Hiln before he gets killed by a skaven assassin. With that in mind, take all your available units and begin the mission.

During deployment, place your troops as far to the northeast as possible. When the mission begins, rush all your units forward to engage Hiln's Guard (7/7). Forget about saving Hiln or killing the Sleaquit—the skaven assassin; concentrate your efforts on eliminating Hiln's Guard quickly. After you've done so,



three regiments of skaven Clanrat Warriors (14/14, 13/13 and 15/15) will appear to the south. Don't try to face the skaven regiment on a one-on-one basis: combine attacks from all three of your units on each enemy regiment until you've destroyed them all.



MAGIC ITEM!

A magical sword—the Dragon Blade—is hidden in a snowman next to a tower in the northeast corner of the map.



ANIMATED SEGUE

Thanqol attempts to give Urgat Ripeye the deadly magical ax he has created.



Mission 4

PATROL (200/200 + 20 PER SKAVEN KILLED)

After returning to Wissenheim, Sven Carlsson will send you on patrol to hunt for skaven. During your patrol, you'll be ambushed twice. In both ambushes, the following tactics apply: team up with all your units against the skaven, and avoid fighting them on a regiment-to-regiment basis.

CHEAT!

While in combat, select one of your wizards. Next, hold down the CTRL key and left-click on the magic button. A window will pop-up with the following message:

SPELLMODE Count.

Left-click on the OK button, and the window will disappear.

Immediately after the window has vanished,

the Winds of Magic cycle will speed up tremendously and turn your wizards into spell-flinging furies of destruction. Yahoo!

Strategy Guide



Ambush 1

You'll face three units of **Skaven Clanrat Warriors** (16/16, 17/17, 14/14) that will attack from the east. Engage the skaven early to bottle them up in the narrow pass to the east, then combine the attacks of your infantry and cavalry, using the **Mercenary Crossbowmen** to pepper the skaven as they advance. Another option is to place your crossbows in the center of the map as bait, and use your cavalry and infantry to pounce on the skaven as they fall into the trap. The key to fighting most skaven units is to inflict the maximum number of casualties as early as possible. If the battle goes against them, skaven are more prone to rout and flee than other races, so use this tactic to your advantage. Be careful to keep your losses to a minimum, because you can't hire reinforcements until the second part of the mission has been completed.



Ambush 2

This is the easier of the two ambush missions, but don't get too cocky. In this mission, you'll face three regiments of skaven **Clanrat Warriors** (12/12, 14/14, 12/12) approaching from the south. The tactics employed in the previous ambush should apply here, too: maximize skaven casualties, and keep your losses to a minimum.



ANIMATED SEGUE

During your patrol, a large force of skaven attacked Wissenheim and set the town ablaze! Even worse, they captured Sven Carlsson's advisor, Ilmarin, and fled into the darkness.

Mission 5

RESCUE ILMARIN (0/1000)

This mission is the toughest you've faced to date. En route to the battlefield, an amber magic wizard called Allor will join your party. You'll need him!

During the deployment phase, place your **Grudgebringer**

ANIMATED SEGUE

After accepting the "ensorcelled" ax from Thanquol, Urgat Ripeye is ready to kill some 'umies!

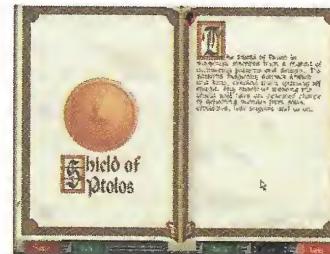
Cavalry and Allor to the extreme southeast edge of the deployment area. Next, place the **Grudgebringer Infantry** and the **Mercenary Crossbowmen** to the eastern edge, facing the closest group of skaven. A group of computer-controlled NPC **Dwarfs** (14/14)—led by Harkon Skullsplitter—will appear toward the middle of the map. Don't worry about saving the dwarfs, because you'll have your hands full just keeping your own troops alive.

In this mission, you're faced with five skaven units: one **Rat Ogre** (1/1), one regiment of **Stormvermin** (11/11), and three regiments of **Clanrat Warriors** (15/15, 12/12, 14/14). The stormvermin and the rat ogre are your biggest problems, as they're tougher and stronger than normal skaven. The rat ogre is especially deadly: it causes **fear** in weak-willed units.

When the battle begins, have Allor cast the spell *Curse of Anraheir* on the southernmost regiment of clanrat warriors (14/14) in an effort to slow them down; engage the rat ogre with the Grudgebringer Cavalry, using the fireball cast by the Grudgebringer sword to weaken it before you engage. Next, have the Grudgebringer Infantry attack the unit of clanrats affected by Allor's curse spell, and use the mercenary crossbowmen to pepper the stormvermin from afar. As the battle progresses, keep using Allor's *Hunting Spear* spell on the rat ogre until it dies; after the rat ogre and the southernmost unit of clanrat warriors have been destroyed, move your units north to finish off the remaining clanrats and



stormvermin. The dwarf warriors will probably be killed to the last man, but don't worry: they'll still appear in the animated segue sequence after the mission.



MAGIC ITEM!

A magical artifact—the **Shield of Ptolos**—is hidden behind some trees in the northwest corner of the map.



ANIMATED SEGUE

After the battle, Ilmarin reveals to Commander Bernhardt and the surviving dwarfs that he is actually Ceridan, a noble elf warrior. He suspects the skaven are up to no good in the World's Edge Mountains, and he intends



will be available—Ramon Black and the Black Avengers—a unit of human warriors dedicated to fighting the skaven. The Avengers are useful because they *hate* skaven, so they're more likely to fight those enemies effectively.



Mission 6

Orc Pursuit (Honor)

Even tougher than the last mission, this one is a real stinker. It's imperative that you take all of your available units for this mission. During deployment, you'll see another group of computer-controlled dwarf warriors on the northwestern edge of the map. Unlike the previous mission, success here demands that you help the dwarfs.

Here's the strategy that worked for me: line up your regiments in this order (from left to right at the northern edge of the deployment area) Grudgebringer Cavalry, Ceridan, Grudgebringer Infantry, Mercenary Crossbowmen, Black's Avengers and Allor. As soon as the battle begins, you'll see the

following regiments arrayed against you, listed from left to right: Big 'Uns (15/15), Orc Boyz (16/16), Orc Boyz (12/12), Orc Arrer Boyz (12/12), Black Orcs (12/12), Orc Boyz (18/18) and Black Orcs (15/15). The dwarfs will get creamed if you don't help them quickly, so engage the left-most orc units (the Big 'Uns and



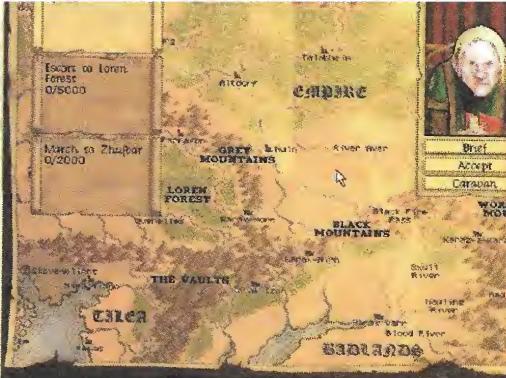
the Orc Boyz) with your cavalry and Ceridan. Move the Grudgebringer Infantry toward the right side of the embattled dwarfs, with the mercenary crossbowmen advancing to pepper the orc units to the east with missile fire. Allor and Black's Avengers have a simple task: delay all the enemy units east of the bridge from closing in on the dwarfs. Accomplish this by using Allor's *Curse of Anraheir* spell to delay their advance, and the Avengers to charge any units that get too close to the dwarfs.

If things go as planned, the dwarfs should be saved and the entire right flank of the orcish line (to the player's left) should crumble. As soon as this happens, sweep your remaining units over to the eastern side of the battlefield to clean up the remaining orcs. Note: don't worry about Ceridan being killed; he'll reappear after the battle, even if he was "killed" during combat. That said, use Ceridan with abandon. At the end of the mission, all your surviving units will receive double experience points.



to stop them. Upon your return to Wissenheim, some new troops

After completing the Orc Pursuit mission, you'll be faced with three mission options: Revenge (0/800), Escort to Loren Forest (0/5000) and the March to Zhufbar (0/2000). The Revenge mini-campaign is by far the easiest, with the March to Zhufbar being slightly more difficult. Most difficult of all is the Escort to Loren Forest mission. If your forces were badly mauled in the last mission, the Revenge Mission is the obvious choice. We'll discuss the missions in the Revenge mini-campaign next.



Mission 7

REVENGE (0/800)

This mission is easy; you won't face even a single enemy unit during your trip to Wissenheim. Save yourself some valuable coinage by taking along only the Grudgebringer Cavalry; you'll have access to all your other regiments by the time you arrive in Wissenheim, but you'll save yourself a lot of money by not selecting them for the mission.

ANIMATED SEQUE

The skaven try out their new tunneling device: the mole machine!



Mission 8

VANBERG (500/1000)

You'll be lent two units free of charge for this mission: the 1st and 2nd Carlsson Guards. When the battle begins, position your Grudgebringer Cavalry, Allor and the Black Avengers to the extreme southern edge of the deployment area, with the Grudgebringer Infantry, 1st Carlsson Guard, 2nd Carlsson

Guard and the Mercenary Crossbowmen immediately behind them.

As soon as the battle starts, engage the Goblin Wolfriders (18/18) with your Grudgebringer Cavalry and use Allor's *Curse of Anraheir* spell to slow down the



approaching Orc Boar Boyz (12/12) and the Goblin Wolfriders (15/15). As in other Warhammer battles, isolate and destroy the enemy regiments in piecemeal fashion.

There are many more challenging missions after the ones listed here. When you finish the Revenge mini-campaign, you'll eventually have to fight your way through to Loren Forest to uncover the insidious plot the skaven are hatching. Regardless of which mission path you choose or the foes you fight, the basic tactics and strategies should help you slaughter those stinky ratskins wholesale. CP



Nemesis

The Wizardry Adventure

Role-Playing for the Masses

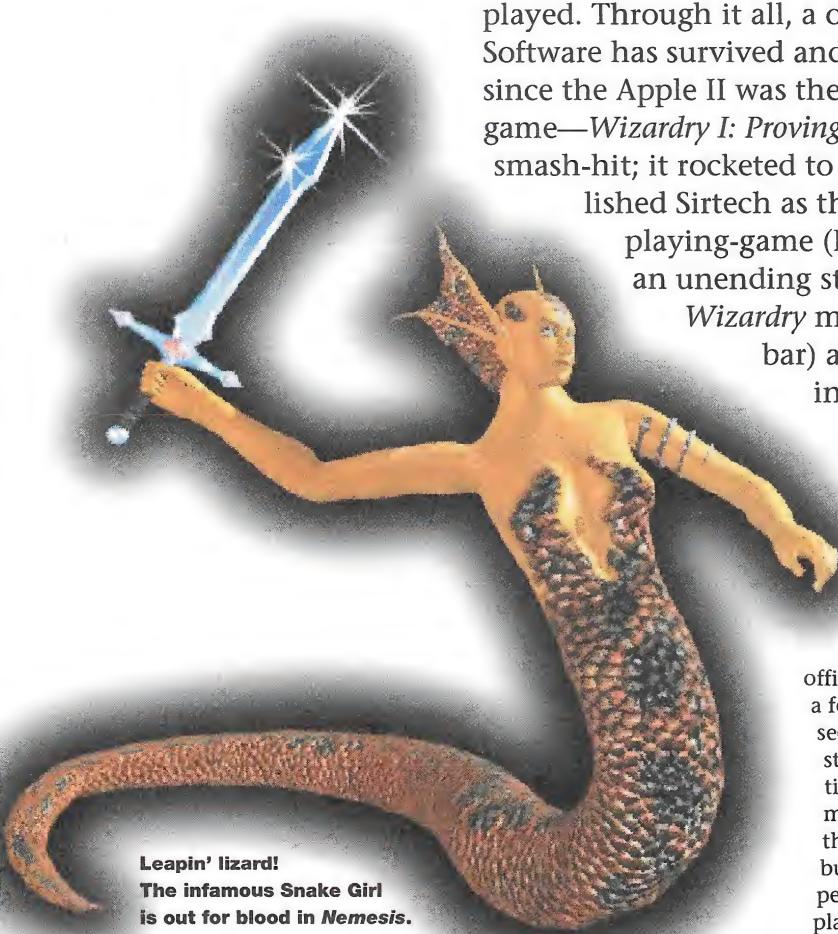
by Jeff James

It's hard to believe that computer gaming is nearly two decades old. Many game companies have come and gone over the years; names such as Datamost, Cinemaware, Adventure International, Synapse and Epyx have disappeared, vanishing from the market and leaving only memories of software bought and games played. Through it all, a once tiny company by the name of Sirtech Software has survived and thrived as a computer game developer since the Apple II was the game machine to beat. Sirtech's first game—*Wizardry I: Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord*—was an instant smash-hit; it rocketed to the top of the best-seller charts and established Sirtech as the standard bearer of the computer role-playing-game (RPG) genre. Since then, Sirtech has released an unending stream of role-playing favorites under the *Wizardry* moniker (see "Two Decades of *Wizardry*" sidebar) and has emerged as a fixture in the game industry. Although RPGs have been Sirtech's bread and butter for nearly two decades, the company is beginning to strike out in a bold new direction by releasing games in other genres.

NORTHERN LIGHTS

I recently had the opportunity to visit Sirtech's business offices in Ogdensburg, NY—a sleepy town that shares more than a few elements with "Northern Exposure's" Cicely, AK. I didn't see any moose wandering about the muddy streets during my stay, but I wouldn't have been surprised. Sirtech's press relations tag-team of Terri Curtis and Shari Mitchell shepherded me through their clean and sparsely furnished business offices, the entrance nestled behind an inconspicuous brown office building. All the bean counting and administrative duties are performed here, while all the actual game development takes place at Sirtech's office across the border in Ottawa, Canada.

Leapin' lizard!
The infamous Snake Girl
is out for blood in *Nemesis*.



Two Decades of Wizardry

If you're a fan of computer role-playing games, the *Wizardry* brand name should be immediately familiar to you. With the notable exception of Origin's *Ultima* series, no other line of role-playing games has matched the success and wide-reaching appeal of *Wizardry*. More than 17 years have transpired since the release of the first *Wizardry* in 1979, and the series continues to this day; *Wizardry VIII* is in the works, tentatively scheduled for a Spring 1997 release.

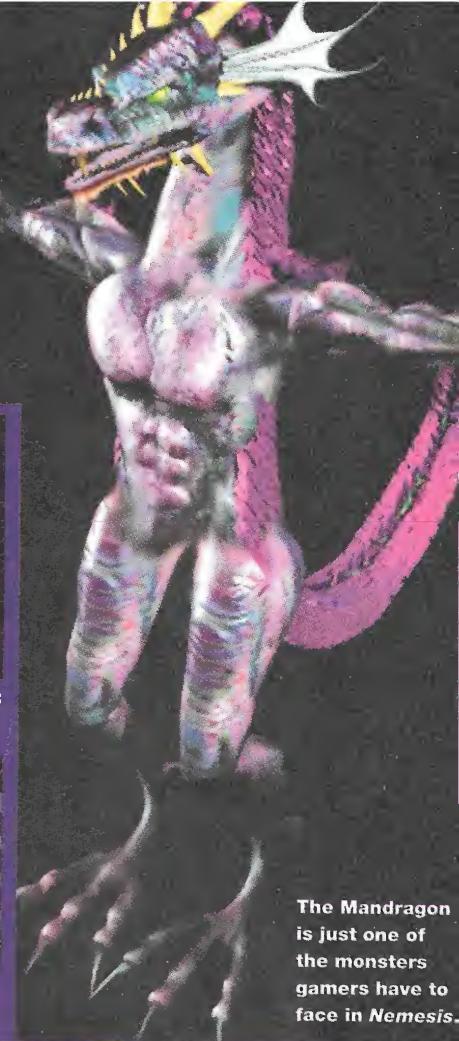
1979	<i>Wizardry I: Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord</i>
1982	<i>Wizardry II: Knight of Diamonds</i>
1984	<i>Wizardry III: Legacy of Liygamyn</i>
1987	<i>Wizardry IV: Return of Werdna</i>
1988	<i>Wizardry V: Heart of the Maelstrom</i>
1990	<i>Wizardry VI: Bane of the Cosmic Forge</i>
1992	<i>Wizardry VII: Crusaders of the Dark Savant</i>
1997	<i>Wizardry VIII: TBA</i>

FORWARD		CAMP	ONHCK	SITHUS	CLUSTER
LEFT	RIGHT	TIME	INSPECT	CLUSTER	
KICK				CLUSTER	
SPELLS					LIGHT PROTECT
# CHARACTER NAME CLASS AC HITS STATUS					
1. ROB THUNDERSON	G-THUN	10	70+	70	
2. LORD KING BROLO	G-LOR	10	50	50	
3. AURELIUS	G-PRI	-1	50	50	
4. QUICKFINGERS	N-THI	1	40	40	
5. GULLIBER	G-BIS	4	30	30	
6. MYSTIC HOGAR	G-MHG	7	45	45	

A trip down to the memory dungeon: *Wizardry I* on the Apple II.



Bashing bats in *Wizardry VI: Bane of the Cosmic Forge*.

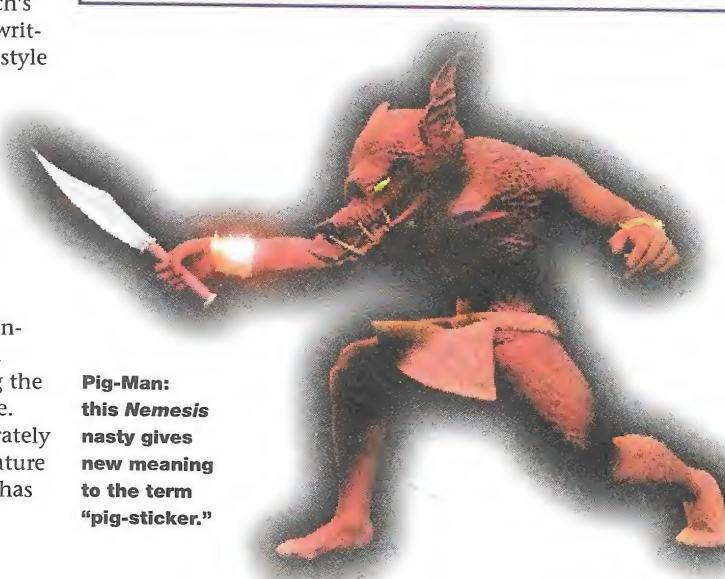


The Mandragon is just one of the monsters gamers have to face in *Nemesis*.



The Story of Sirtech

One of the founding companies in the computer gaming industry, Sirtech released their first game (*Wizardry I: Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord*) in 1979, for the Apple II computer. Incorporated in 1981, Sirtech has systematically established itself as one of the leading producers of role-playing games. A privately held firm, it has flourished under the capable guidance of the Sirotek brothers: vice president Rob Sirotek (39, right) and president Norm Sirotek (37). In an industry where smaller game developers are routinely acquired by larger ones, Sirtech's independence is something of a rarity.



Pig-Man: this *Nemesis* nasty gives new meaning to the term "pig-sticker."

NEMESIS: THE WIZARDRY ADVENTURE

Sirtech's boldest step forward is the upcoming *Nemesis* (not to be confused with Activision's *Zork Nemesis*), a game that Sirtech hopes will appeal to a new generation of gamers. Unlike previous titles bearing the *Wizardry* moniker, *Nemesis* won't be a hard-boiled role-playing game. With impressive 3-D graphics, a facile interface and a host of moderately difficult puzzles, *Nemesis* comes across more like a low-calorie adventure game than a stat-heavy RPG. Perhaps the subtitle says it all: Sirtech has dubbed *Nemesis: The Wizardry Adventure*.

Nemesis

Set in the fantasy world of Nithera, *Nemesis* allows the player to don the leather boots of a long-haired hero type who bears an uncanny resemblance to Fabio, the ubiquitous romance novel cover boy. The player's goal is to uncover the mystery of the Nitherin talismans (powerful magical artifacts) and save the world of Nithera from disaster. The game shares some elements with Brøderbund's popular *Myst*, with a game world that has been rendered entirely on the computer. The interface is simple and straightforward: a key press or mouse click is all that is needed to move through the game universe.

Clicking the left mouse button will cause you to attack with the weapon in your left hand, while pressing the right will do the same for that appendage. Combat is direct and straightforward, and the player has a potent library of spells to draw on for combat. All the spells are accompanied by wonderfully rendered animations: a poison spell creates a noxious cloud of greenish gas that rushes off to an opponent, while a frost spell bombards your foes with sheets of ice crystals.

In addition to the gorgeous graphics and animation treatment, Sirtech is taking a balanced approach to puzzle design. "We're trying to make the puzzles challenging, but logical," says *Nemesis* producer/designer Linda Currie. "Too many adventure games have thrown logic out the window when it comes to puzzle design." Most of the puzzles I was able to try were indeed challenging, but not overly so. With an eye on the burgeoning number of novice gamers, Sirtech is going out of its way to make *Nemesis* as inviting, entertaining and easy to play as possible.

Understandably, Sirtech has high hopes for

If you think only McDonald's and Coke can sponsor an Olympic team, think again: tiny Sirtech Software has become a sponsor, too. The company has thrown its support behind the 1996 U.S. bobsled team, which will race for the gold in a jet-black sled emblazoned with the Sirtech dragon and logo. According to Terri Curtis, Sirtech's PR manager, the company will give away 100,000 USA bobsled posters to coincide with the release of *Wizardry Gold* and *Star Trail: Shadows Over Riva*. Curtis says that Sirtech plans to take a member of the bobsled team—athlete Chris Coleman—to the Electronic Entertainment Exposition (E3) show in Los Angeles this May.

Fire-Breathing Bobsleds



Jagged Alliance: Deadly Games

One of the most popular strategy games of 1995, Sirtech's *Jagged Alliance*—developed by Ian Currie and Madlab Software—thrilled gamers with its addictive gameplay and motley assortment of opinionated mercenaries. As the sequel to *Jagged Alliance*, *Jagged Alliance: Deadly Games* goes well beyond the scope of the original.

Instead of chasing down Lucas Santino and his sap-grubbing goons (as was the case in *Jagged Alliance*), gamers can exchange gunfire with up to three other human players over a network, or two can go mano-a-mano over a modem or serial link. The multiplayer aspect goes beyond combat: even before you can start slinging lead at your comrades, you must engage in a vigorous bidding war to recruit your favorite mercs. If you have enough money left over, you can buy semi-legal firearms and munitions from Micky—an ex-IRA terrorist who has decided



Like her father, a fine-time marksman in I.U.W.I.L., Buzz can pick-off almost any target in range. A big fan of the *Violent Femmes*, she's currently writing her first gay romance novel, entitled "Under Cover Under Lungs." She is also a fine



to set up shop as a gun merchant.

Ten new mercenaries make an appearance, and designer Currie says that roughly 80 percent of the dialogue for the original *Jagged Alliance* mercs is entirely new. Computer-controlled mercenaries have been improved as well. "Mercenaries now have 'buddies.' Their morale will increase when they're working along-



round out the package, Sirtech will include both a full-blown scenario editor and a campaign editor, allowing gamers to create their own missions from scratch. Although more evolutionary than revolutionary, *Deadly Games* is shaping up to be a must-

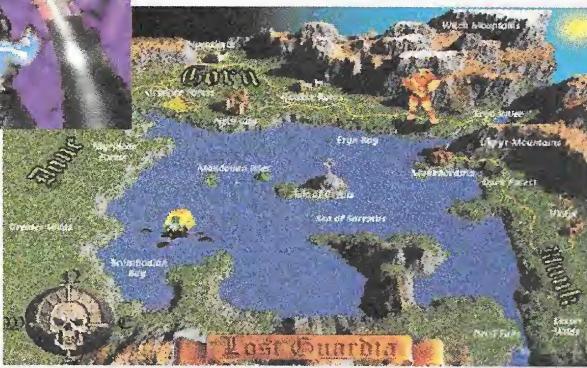
buy for every gamer who burned the midnight oil playing *Jagged Alliance*.



Wizardry Gold

While IBM PC-compatible computer owners have been privy to all the games in the *Wizardry* series, Macintosh gamers have had to sit at a distance and hungrily salivate over such classic role-playing games as *Wizardry VI: Bane of the Cosmic Forge* and *Wizardry VII: Crusaders of the Dark Savant*. That unfortunate situation will soon be rectified with the release of *Wizardry Gold*—a ground-up rewrite of *Wizardry VII*.

Optimized for use with the Macintosh, *Wizardry Gold* will also be made available to Windows users, with specific versions included for Windows 95, Windows NT and Windows 3.1. The storyline and setting remain unchanged from the original *Wizardry VII*, but the graphics, animated cut scenes and sound effects are either new or improved substantially.



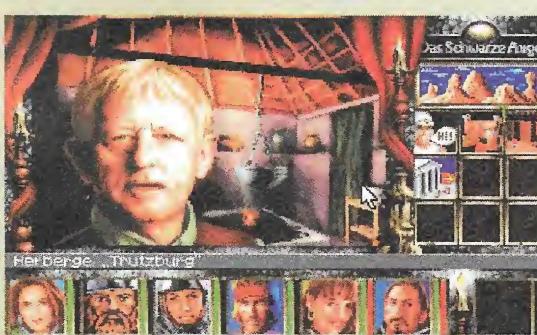
compared with the original. Sirtech is also giving the game a polished point-and-click interface and a number of other enhancements. "We want *Wizardry Gold* to be as appealing to novices as it is to veteran *Wizardry* players," says Robin Matthews, Sirtech's director of external development. To that end, a number of new features, including an online instruction manual, a hypertext hint book and a fully featured automapping utility, will make the game more accessible to *Wizardry* tenderfoots.



Realms of Arkania: Shadows over Riva

While Sirtech is attempting to draw new gamers into the fold with *Nemesis*, it hasn't forgotten its hardcore role-playing roots. *Wizardry VIII* is currently in development for a 1998 release, while the third game in the *Realms of Arkania* series—*Shadows Over Riva*—should be available by the fall of 1996.

Developed by German game developer Attic Entertainment Software, *Shadows Over Riva* promises to offer gamers more of the exhaustive detail and intricate complexity that made the previous games in the *Realms of Arkania* series (*Blade of Destiny* and *Star Trail*) so popular with the computer RPG crowd. I saw an early version of *Shadows Over Riva* at the Sirtech offices, and I came away impressed. Like *Star Trail*, *Shadows Over Riva* uses a 3-D first-person perspective to display the game world while the player is navigating through it. When combat occurs, the action shifts to an overhead isometric viewpoint.



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EYES	11	HO 6
SKIN	10	RE 7
BODY	12	LE 8
GP	11	TA 7
HP	8	ME 7
PP	12	CE 5
LIF	30	AGE 0
STRENGHT	42	ENDURANCE 7
INTELLECT	7	

in the tradition of MicroProse's X-COM. The 3-D engine in *Shadows* is a generation beyond the one employed in previous games and rivals 3-D action shooters such as *Hexen* and *Duke Nukem 3D*.



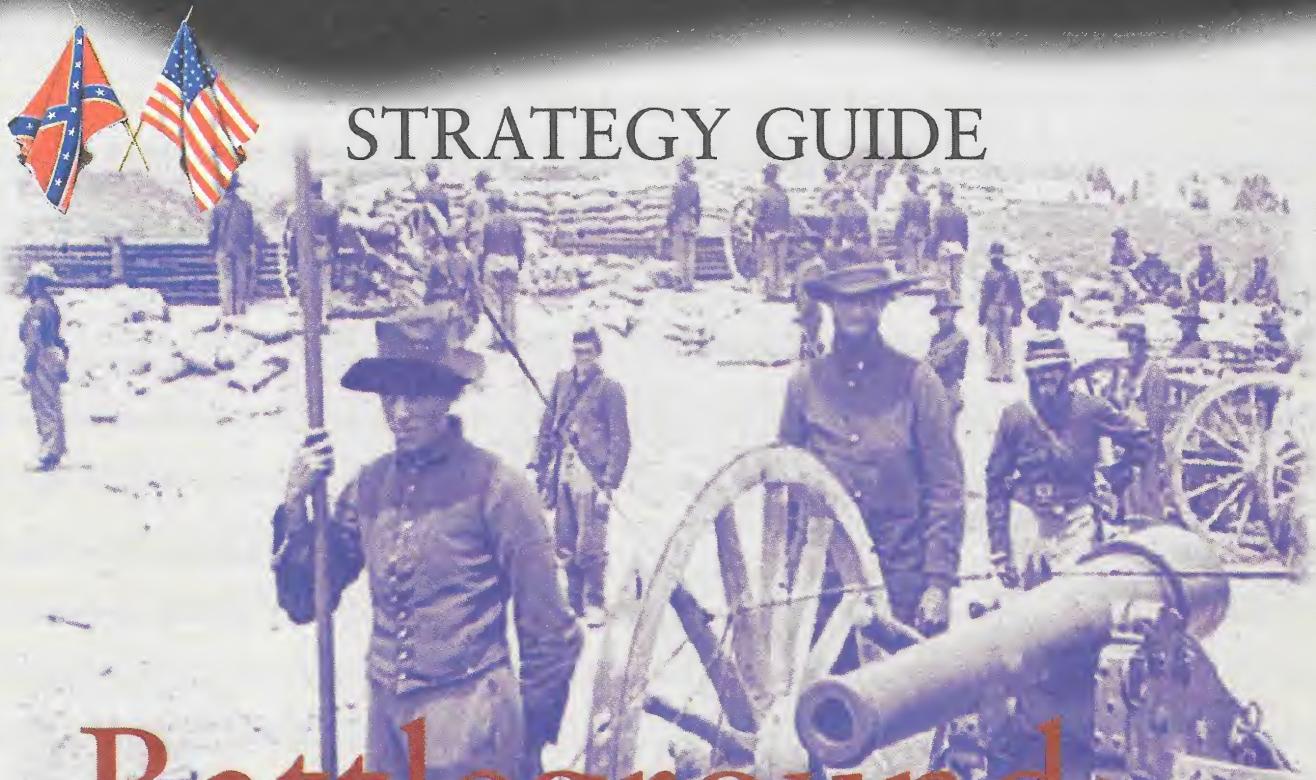
According to Guido Henkel, Attic Entertainment's managing director, even more impressive games set in the *Realms of Arkania* game world are in the works. "We're developing a new game engine from the bottom up, which will take the *Realms of Arkania* series into the 21st Century."

Nemesis, which should hit the market by October 1996.

There is some risk involved: the *Wizardry* name has become synonymous with stat-heavy, content-rich role-playing, and any attempt to soften those elements could leave *Nemesis* in the precarious position of not having enough depth to please *Wizardry* stalwarts while simultaneously being too complex for the *Myst* crowd. Only time and a receptive market of consumers will tell whether Sirtech's strategy is a valid one.

That said, *Nemesis* does hold a great deal of promise. With thousands of new computer gamers entering the market each week, the game could find itself well-received by hordes of newbies looking for a light, enjoyable role-playing adventure. Sirtech's other offerings—*Wizardry Gold*, *Shadows Over Riva* and *Jagged Alliance: Deadly Games*—will surely do well, but they lack the potential to reach an audience as wide as *Nemesis* potentially can. Regardless, the days of Sirtech being a one-product company are long over.

For the latest information on Sirtech's products, check out their website at <http://www.sir-tech.com>. CP



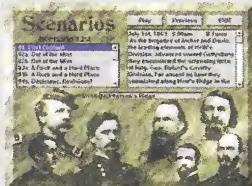
STRATEGY GUIDE

Battleground: Gettysburg

by Kevin J. McCann

Glancing to your left, you watch the cavalry get ready to make a charge across the shallow ford. To the right, your infantry lies behind a breastwork, ready to move forward at your signal. Traces of rebels can be seen in the rounded hills before your regiment, although they clearly have the advantage of superior cover. Reinforcements are scheduled to arrive soon, but you decide to attempt to secure the base of the hills.

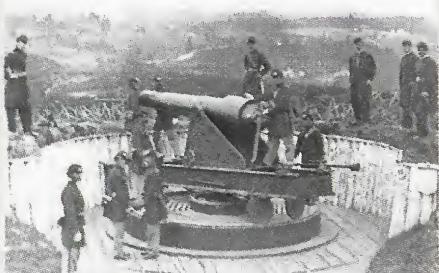
The cavalry thunders forward, and your infantry follows suit. As you near the hills, the deafening blasts of muskets fill the air, coming from the hills. You make a charge for the base of the hills only to be met with artillery raining down, and chaos envelops your regiment. Looking wildly about you at your falling and fallen comrades, you decide it would've been better to wait for reinforcements.



Whereas most strategy wargames focus on wars that occurred during the 20th century, *Gettysburg* takes you back to the early 19th century. There were no planes, tanks, or other vehicles of war—just man against man using muskets and cannons. Leadership meant everything, and there were no sophisticated satellites to link overhead tactical maps to hot zones; there wasn't even radio for communication. This was war at its simplest, yet most complex.

This guide focuses on general strategies that are applicable to the various scenarios in *Battleground: Gettysburg*. Each section discusses important tactics that will help ensure victory over the other side, whether you're being faithful to history and playing as the Union, or taking a shot at bringing the Confederacy to victory.

Tools of War



This section focuses on the three units directly involved in the Gettysburg battle: infantry, cavalry and artillery. In addition to a brief explanation of each group, tactics that best utilize each unit's strengths are provided.

Infantry

The real ground-pounders of the Civil War were the infantry—marching, blasting and impaling their way through the thick of things. Your most abundant supply of forces is within the infantry, but to get the most out of them, you have to use them properly.

First, don't get carried away with having your infantry run all over the place. This will endanger their proximity to the brigade leaders and increase



the potentially damaging effects of routing. Another negative effect of moving the infantry randomly is that, besides lining up like ducks for the enemy, you'll be wasting time; determine in advance where you want to put your infantry, and station them there. You have only

a certain number of turns per scenario, so trotting all over the landscape isn't a good idea.

A fatigued infantry will perform substantially worse in combat than a positioned and well-rested group of soldiers. You'll need your infantry to take care of the bulk of the fighting, so keep them in tip-top shape.

When setting up for battle near an enemy, have your infantry make a breastworks. Though this will cost your infantry some fatigue, it will also provide them with additional and essential cover during battle.

Cavalry

Cavalry has more per-strength points than infantry, and that makes them valuable if managed wisely. But you don't have nearly as many cavalry as infantry. With that in mind, don't have your cavalry charge into enemy units unless you want to have plenty of riderless horses.

The cavalry are best used defensively. Because of their speed and the damage they can inflict, they perform best when helping to defend infantry. They can also be used effectively as scouting parties, riding ahead to survey an area, then racing back if there's trouble.

Artillery

The biggest guns during Gettysburg were howitzers, Napoleon cannons and Parrott, Rodman and Whitworth cannons. Depending on its range and destructive capabilities, artillery can be the deciding edge in a battle.

Effective use of artillery begins with proper placement. Cannons sitting behind a hill obviously won't have very good shots at enemies on the other side. Use the Check LOS toolbox button to test the different lines of sight from your artillery and gain various vantage points. You can then decide which vantage point offers the



best coverage.

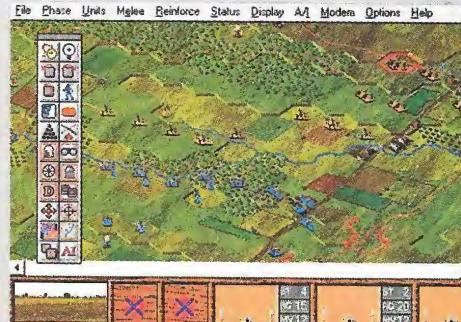
Keep in mind that artillery is heavy and not easily moved, so the less you have to move your cannons about, the better you'll be situated for using them in battle.

Obviously, if you move your artillery all over the place, the men moving the artillery will become very fatigued, and that will lessen their effectiveness during the melee.

Last, but not least, your artillery has range, so don't bring it too close to a battle.

Artillery naturally has a higher-value damage potential than infantry, and this is displayed in Gettysburg as more per-strength points. Artillery will do you no good at point-blank range, and the enemy soldiers will be able to fire on the unit operating the artillery. For this reason, it's a very good idea to keep some infantry near your vulnerable artillery to protect them.

If you lose the men operating an artillery unit, first work to rescue the area with infantry and cavalry; after all, bringing in a replacement crew when the enemies who eliminated your last artillery crew are still there will cost you unnecessary lives. Once you've secured the area, re-crew your artillery.



Organization



During any scenario, it's vital to keep an eye on the organization of your troops. The infantry, cavalry and artillery won't amount to anything if they aren't close enough to receive orders from their brigade and divisional leaders. Remember, this

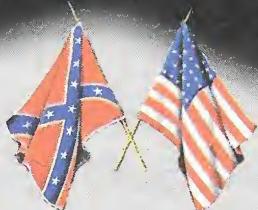
was a time in which the command radius of a leader was severely limited. Using the Show Organization toolbox button to monitor your various units will help you keep them well within the command radius.

Ideally, your regiments should be safely within the command radius of their brigade leader. In turn, you want your brigade leader

to be within the command radius of his divisional leader. This keeps a flow of communication throughout the chain of command, prevents undue routing and other possible disruptions and aids immensely in rallying your forces in short order.



Battleground: STRATEGY GUIDE



Views

Gettysburg offers five overhead views from which to watch everything that's going down. Proper use of these views is important when following battles across the landscape. By zooming in on only

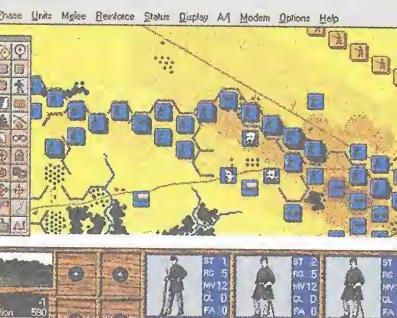
one area and not watching others, you can miss an enemy slipping in from the side or from behind, and this could cost you the scenario.

The 2-D zoom-in view should be used often as a quick overall reference to check out the main map and



the locations of various units—friendly or otherwise. The 2-D zoom-in view can be used to slightly enlarge a portion of the map and make it easier to see the various units.

Zooming in even closer can be done by using the 3-D zoom-out, which provides a detailed, fairly close-up map of the area. This is the default map when playing the game. Last, but not least, the closest zoom-in can be achieved through the 3-D normal view, which offers the most detail and allows you to easily make out units in close quarters. The 3-D normal view is especially good for close cropping of friendly and enemy units and for studying the local terrain.



Last, but not least, the jump window map is useful for moving to another portion of the map quickly and efficiently. Just switch to the map, and click where you want to zoom in.

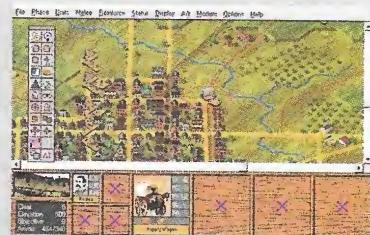


Supply and Demand

The last thing you want to see is your foremost soldier turn to the one behind him and ask, "Got some ammo?" and then see that soldier turn to the next and ask the same question—along down the

entire line. At all times, you must keep your soldiers supplied with the necessities of war especially if you plan to attack or are in the midst of an attack.

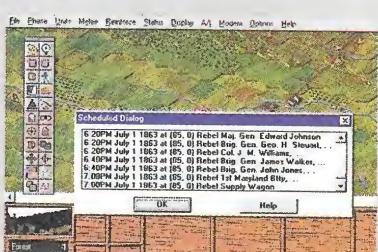
Though you certainly don't want to park your supply wagons in the middle of the raging battlefield, they shouldn't be where your soldiers can't get more ammunition quickly and easily. Therefore, it's best to keep the wagons a few hexes behind the front line, but still near enough to allow your front soldiers to readily get supplies when they start to run low. Do not exceed five hexes total from your supply wagon to the front line, or your troops will not be able to "re-supply."



Reinforcements

So you think you're bad enough to take out all the rebels in the hill without backup? Then you're right, you are bad—at commanding. Reinforcements can play a pivotal role in backing up your main contingent and in adding strength to your overall regiment. Patience can often be the stepping stone to an overeager opponent.

Before you head into any battle, use the Reinforce pull-down menu to check on the arrival time and location of any reinforcements you're scheduled to receive. Granted, some scenarios may



not have reinforcements, but most do, so it's well worth checking out.

After determining when and where your reinforcements will arrive, try to combine them logically with your next offensive/defensive





move. If necessary, you may move your regiment to meet the reinforcements so that, when they arrive, they immediately add to your units' overall strength.

Reinforcements are meant do just that—reinforce. Use them wisely to spell doom for your opponents.

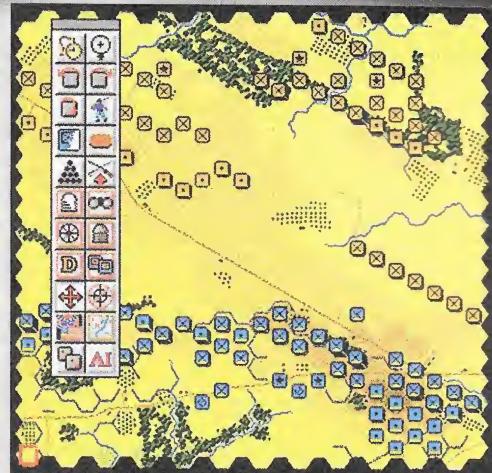
★ ★ Reserve

Though reinforcements can be immediately immersed in your regiment, you may want to keep them as a reserve (or backup). Even if you don't have reinforcements on the way, it's important to have a reserve force ready to back up your main forces on a moment's notice.

Throwing all your forces together and pounding forward can be useful in the short run, but if they run into trouble and you don't have an extra force to help bail them out, you could easily lose the scenario. Another good use of reserves is to have a side group that's ready to plug a gap created by an unexpected routing, or simply to have fresh troops to throw forward into combat at an important moment when breaching the enemy's lines.



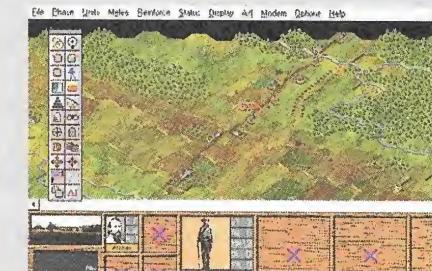
If you don't, you may find yourself perfectly positioned except for the major glaring error that your troops are looking the wrong way and getting slaughtered in the process.



★ ★ Outflanking

One of the most important tactics in the Civil War was outflanking the enemy, i.e., instead of having one main force hit the enemy from one angle, divide your force to stretch your lines and overlap flanks to hit the enemy from many angles.

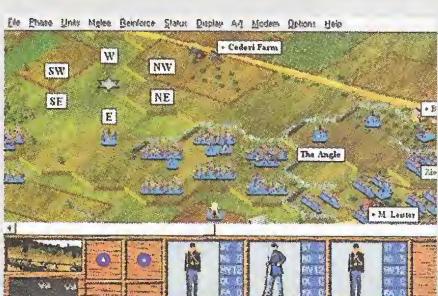
Technically, this will give you a hefty +2 combat shift in your favor. In reality, it will give your enemy serious casualties, because they'll face one flank while your other flank hits them from behind or at the side. Consolidating your forces into one large area can be fun, but it's also very hazardous against enemy artillery. Subsequently outflanking your opponent not only lessens the danger to any given unit, but also increases the danger to your opponent.



★ ★ Facing

You have 1,000 infantry well-rested and hungry for combat. They've been polishing their musket barrels all day long, waiting for the impending glory. The only problem is, they're looking the wrong way, and the enemy is about to blast them from behind!

The direction your unit is facing is extremely important to establishing a wide line of fire and to covering areas. Whether you use infantry, cavalry, or artillery, always check the facing/formation icon for each unit as you select it.



★ ★ Debriefing

Once you've mastered taking on the computer in *Battleground: Gettysburg*, you'll want to turn to taking on a friend via modem for



the ultimate challenge. Whereas the artificial intelligence in *Gettysburg* tends to be predictable, playing another person is the closest thing to creating a true, unpredictable,

chaotic situation—not to mention that it's more satisfying to vanquish your friend's ego than to beat a high-tech automaton. CP

How it Works

Our reviews are the opinions of our freelance and staff writers. Games are rated on a scale of 1 to 10; 10 is the highest rating.

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Genres



ACTION



STRATEGY



SIMULATION



ADVENTURE



SPORTS

Stamps of Approval

If you see one of these stamped on a review, put down the magazine, go to your software store and buy said game immediately.

CP PERFECT!

Excels in all categories. A milestone. These games are very rare.



CP RECOMMENDED

An overall great game. If you're an avid player of the genre, this game is a must-own for your library.



2 Summary Paragraph

It all ties together here, where we issue our final verdict and tell you honestly whether it's a dog or a *Doom*.

3 Ratings Categories

OVERALL: this rating takes into account all the game's pluses and minuses. This overall rating is not an average of the other scores.

\$ VALUE: we tell you whether a particular game is worth your hard-earned dollars. With games running anywhere from \$20 to \$80, you might find this rating indispensable.

ORIGINALITY: a look at the effort that was put into creating a unique gaming experience. Same old just doesn't cut it here.

PLAYABILITY: ease of game's interface, enjoyment of the task involved, control mechanism and replayability all factor in here. Playability is a game's single most important aspect.

GRAPHICS: we look at things such as animation, background and character art, color palette, scrolling, resolution, etc.

MUSIC: we evaluate those wonderful musical scores.

SOUND FX: on the side of the human head, ears play a big part in evaluating this non-musical aspect of the game. Creating an atmosphere is crucial.

OVERALL 8

\$ Value 8

Originality 5

Playability 8

Graphics 9

Music 7

Sound FX 7

REVIEW

COMMAND & CONQUER: THE COVERT OPERATIONS

COMPUTER PLAYER CP RECOMMENDED

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THE COVERT OPERATIONS

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1 Techbox

Important stuff you need to know about the game, including hardware requirements, developer, publisher and price. You'll even discover some of the game's active ingredients.



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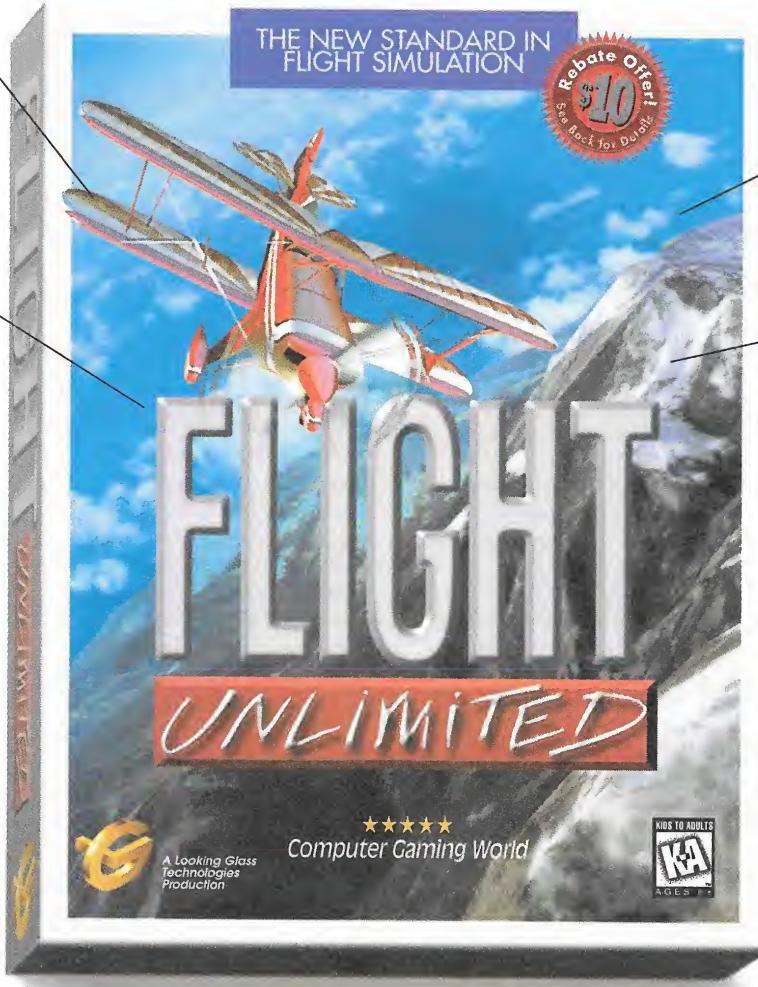
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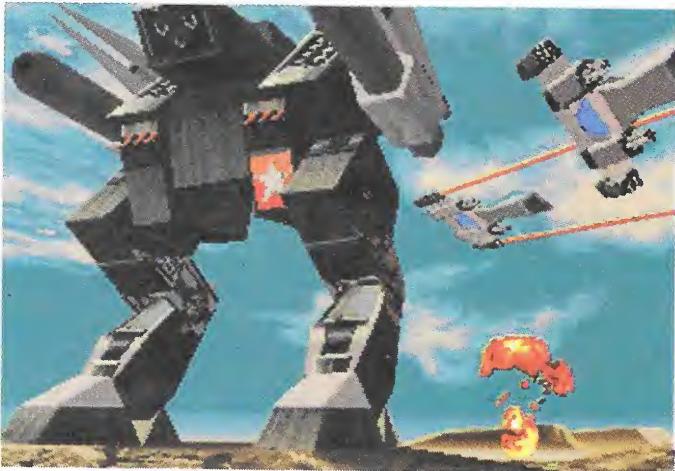
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EarthSiege 2



Your HUD changes with each of the nine HERCS.

Was it Coleridge who first said "Mechs, Mechs, everywhere, and all the boards did shrink/Mechs, Mechs, everywhere, I think I need a drink"? Maybe that was me. In any event, *EarthSiege 2* is yet another contribution to the heavily laden genre of mech games. As I played through this title's many missions, I kept asking myself, "What does this game have that no other game has?"



Do you think they have valet parking for these things?

Activision's tour-de-force, *MechWarrior II*. My searching was in vain, however, as I soon realized that there was nothing groundbreaking in this game. While I was pleasantly surprised by some eye candy and a neat-o new flying machine—the Razor—I really

thwart these evil-doers. Your quest is, as per the norm, broken down into many missions. Each mission has several objectives; the achievement of these objectives brings you that much closer to your goal. As the game progresses, your objectives become more and more difficult to achieve. With so many of these types of games on the market, it seems that *ES2* could have really benefited from a more original plot.

Gameplay in this title is, though not horrible, certainly nothing to write home about. The standardized view of the game is from the cockpit of your mech, er, I mean, HERC. When your Razor's construction is complete (which takes a few missions), certain missions allow you to use the flying contraption to butt heads with the Cybrids from the air. This feature, which had the ability to really set this game apart from other mech games, isn't utilized fully and seems more like a distraction than a significant aspect of gameplay. The controls of your HERC aren't nearly as simple as they could have been. Using an F-16 Flightstick, I still found it difficult to keep up with all the keyboard commands required to play successfully. In all fairness, it

Starting off subtly in the beginning of each mission and then building to crescendos, the music does much to get the player fully involved with the game.



The flames look nice, but look at the ground!

TECH BOX



Price: \$59.95

Media: compact disc

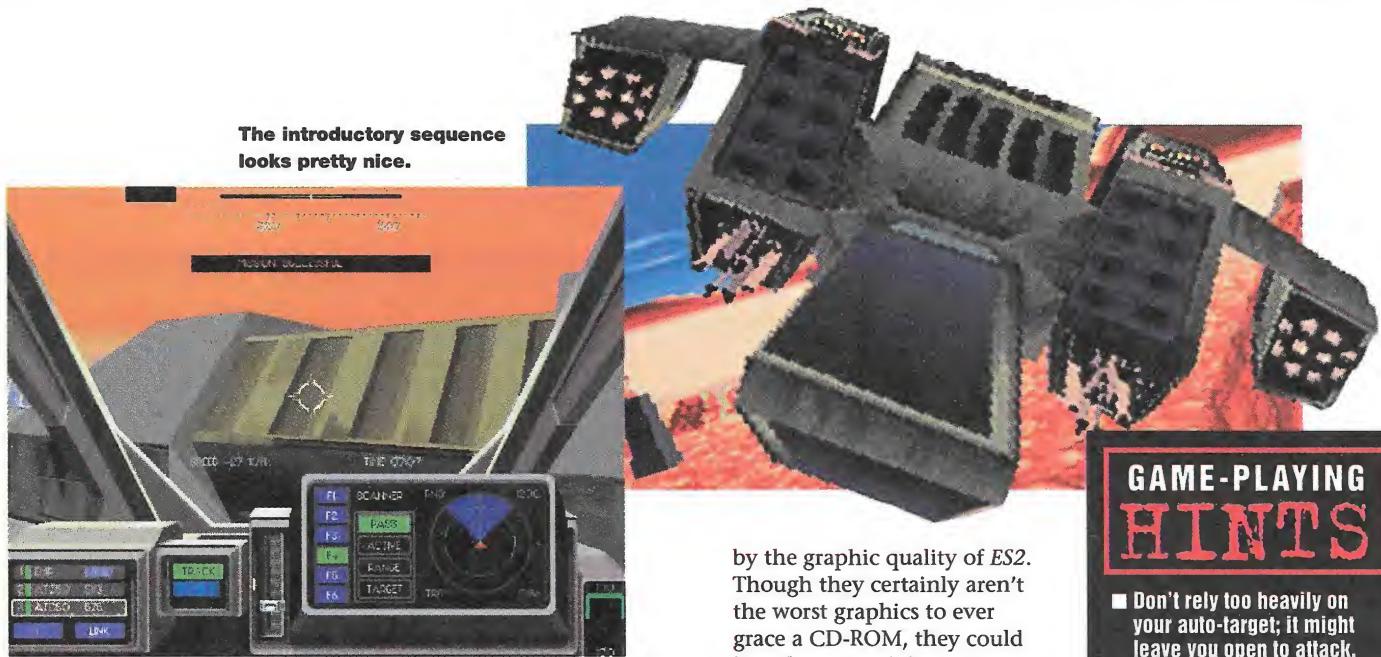
Developer: Sierra

Publisher: Sierra
3380 146th Place SE,
Ste. 300, Bellevue, WA
98007; 206.649.9800

Website:
<http://www.sierra.com>

Min. system req:
IBM PC 486
Local bus SVGA
graphics card
Windows 95
2X CD-ROM drive
8 megabytes RAM
16 megabytes hard drive

didn't see anything significantly original. Sierra certainly didn't set out to break any ground with the story behind their latest offering. Using your HERC (not a mech, mind you), you must fight the evil hordes of Cybrids that threaten to take over the world. Operating your own HERC or Razor and (sometimes) directing the actions of others, you need to find and



The introductory sequence looks pretty nice.

I was expecting a ticker-tape parade.

should be noted that this problem isn't unique to *ES2*; virtually every other mech game, with the exception of *MechWarrior 2*, suffers from this inconvenient control. Piloting the Razor is a little easier, but it can still be frustrating. In between missions, you have the ability to add people to your team, repair your HERC, build a new

Duke Nukem 3D and *Quake*, it's readily apparent that game makers have the ability to blow our minds with incredibly realistic graphics. Texture-mapped environments and silky smooth animation, formerly the sole property of consoles, have become commonplace on the PC.

Knowing this, I was a bit befuddled when I saw the many "so-so" graphics that fill *ES2*. Though the playing environments weren't horribly blocky, there was a definite problem with pixelation. In addition, the texture mapping on the terrain could have done with some serious tweaking. In many instances, the "sand" or "dirt" on

which you walk seems more like cardboard than anything else. It should be noted, however, that there are some breathtaking graphics to be found in this digital world. Of particular interest is the animation of the Cybrids crashing to earth. Up close, the Cybrids and buildings around you look much better than the terrain. Pixelation isn't as much of a problem with these objects. In all, however, the player is left underwhelmed



The detail on these buildings is a definite plus.

HERC, or customize your current HERC with new weapons. This must all be done in exchange for scrap metal you picked up during your previous missions. Again, this was considered a really cool feature of mech games when they were first introduced; now, however, it's just old hat. Though *ES2* delivers a slightly above-average gameplay package, its lack of innovation is really a disappointment.

Looking at games such as

by the graphic quality of *ES2*. Though they certainly aren't the worst graphics to ever grace a CD-ROM, they could have been much better.

In the area of sound, *ES2* manages to earn a measure of redemption for its stale gameplay and ho-hum graphics. The classical score that accompanies each mission is very powerful. Starting off subtly in the beginning of each mission and then building to crescendos, the music does much to get the player fully involved with the game. Anyone familiar with *Return Fire* knows the effect that

ES2 Isn't a bad game, but it's not a great game, either. *MechWarrior 2*, it seems, has set a standard for mech games. If games hope to compete with or exceed this standard, they need to involve some sort of innovation. "Same old, same old," isn't going to cut it in a business driven by change. In the end, *ES2*'s excellent use of music and sound can't save it from average gameplay and graphics.

GAME-PLAYING HINTS

- Don't rely too heavily on your auto-target; it might leave you open to attack.
- Use the terrain to your advantage; enemies appearing on the crests of hills are easy pickings.

good music can have on a game. Though the sound effects aren't executed quite as well, they're above-average and manage to bring you a little closer to the game.

OVERALL 7

EARTHSIEGE 2

GENRE: action.

CONTENTS: Mechs, Cybrids, HERCS, futuristic adventure and cosmic mayhem.

HITS: excellent score, decent sound effects, variety of missions.

MISSES: average graphics, slow and unoriginal gameplay.

LAST WORD: with the exception of "mech heads," if such creatures exist, most people will be left with an empty feeling because of this game's inability to provide anything new.

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Shellshock

I can't come up with a clever intro for this review, no matter how loud I turn up Boston—for reasons I can never hope to understand, singing along to "More Than A Feeling" usually breaks my writer's block—so let's just use the boring approach. It's the year 1997, and you're the latest recruit in a group of New York-based tank-driving mercenaries called Da Wardenz. Your task in *Shellshock* is to drive your M-13 Predator Battletank into various war zones across the globe and



by a mysterious white guy known only as "The Man" (I kid you not); 9-1-1 is the pilot of Da Wardenz, and he flies the A-10 (for air strikes) and the Chinook (for hostage rescues). Props is the ordnance

and supply guy, and it's from him that you purchase equipment and ammo for your Predator. (Why you're buying equipment from Props when you're all on the same team and would presumably benefit

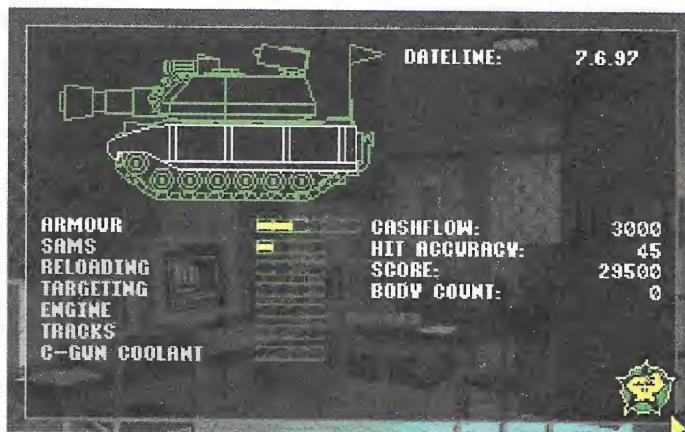
Your task in *Shellshock* is to drive your M-13 Predator Battletank into various war zones across the globe and complete a variety of missions, which invariably involve loud, flashy, crowd-pleasing weapons of mass destruction.

TECH BOX

**Media:** compact disc**Developer:** Core Design**Publisher:** U.S. Gold, 303 Sacramento St., San Francisco, CA 94111; 415.693.0297.**Min. system req:**
IBM PC 486, 33MHz
2X CD-ROM drive
MS-DOS 5.0
SVGA graphics card
8 megabytes RAM
1 megabyte hard disk

complete a variety of missions, which invariably involve loud, flashy, crowd-pleasing weapons of mass destruction.

Before each mission, you get to wander around Da Wardenz headquarters—er, headquarters—and talk to your teammates. Earshot is the communications and tactics expert, and he pops up during the tank sequences to guide you to your targets. D-Tour is your tank copilot. Dogg-Tagg is the brains of the operation, and he issues a briefing at the start of each mission, sometimes assisted



After every mission, you can upgrade your tank with faster targeting computers, surface-to-air missiles and a pair of fuzzy dice.

from freely exchanging stuff, is never explained.)

Among Props' warez—er, wares—are armor repair (to fix damage suffered during the previous mission), extra armor, surface-to-air missiles (fun!), chain-gun coolant (to

joystick, and shoot at a variety of targets. Most enemies in the initial missions are ground-based foes, such as tanks and armored personnel carriers (I sound more like an Army recruiter with each paragraph), but later missions have gunboats and helicopters for a little variety. And that's about it. *Shellshock* doesn't have revolutionary gameplay, or graphics, or anything new; it's merely an arcade tank-combat game. No big whoop.

Shellshock's graphics are in lo-res 320 x 200 throughout,

which surprised me mightily until I realized that this game will be ported to the Saturn and PlayStation game systems; I guess the artists are making it easy on themselves by keeping the graphics chunky for easier conversion. The tank-driving sequence looks surprisingly decent, since the landscape graphics are not texture-mapped, and therefore not ugly (as in the disappointing *Armored Fist*).

The "hardcore" music in *Shellshock* is supplied by Bar None, aka William Floyd of the San Francisco 49ers. It's certainly different from the usual computer-game tunage,



Shellshock's graphics are a mere 320 x 200 pixels, but they aren't blocky like certain other tank games (cough—*Armored Fist*—cough).

combat that darn overheating), a reload mechanism upgrade (to fire the main gun faster), a targeting computer upgrade (to lock onto enemies faster), an engine upgrade, a track upgrade (for better traction) and air support.

During each mission, you steer the Predator around using the keyboard (which allows you to control the turret and tank separately) or



Shellshock adds a little "flava" to the arcade tank genre by mixing tried-and-true gameplay with hip-hop attitude.



but quickly gets just as repetitive—especially with only five CD tracks to choose from. The sound effects are good, and the voice acting is OK, but some of the accents veer dangerously close to stereotypical, although I recall that the original *Wing Commander* was just as bad with its stereotypical French woman Angel and stereotypical Scottish dude Paladin.

Shellshock is a decent action game, but anyone who has been playing computer games for long has played this a dozen times under different names: *Battlezone*, *M1 Tank Platoon*, *Armored Fist*, etc. *Shellshock* isn't boring: the day I tire of blowing things up is the day I take a flying leap from the nearest high-rise, but it's just the same old thing with a hip-hop overcoat of paint and an eight-player network mode. It's destined to make me shrug my shoulders when I think about it in six months' time.

GAME-PLAYING HINTS

■ To control the turret and the tank independently, use the keyboard controls instead of the joystick. (You can drive in one direction and shoot in another—handy for avoiding enemy projectiles.)

■ Upgrade your armor and reload mechanism at the start of the game, and leave the engine and track upgrades for later. You don't need speed for the first few missions.



SHELLSHOCK

GENRE: action.

CONTENTS: tank combat, hip-hop music, and eight-player network action.

HITS: easy to learn, but hard to master—just like dating.

MISSES: "gangsta" angle leaves me colder than New England in December; you've seen and played this game many times before.

LAST WORD: *Shellshock* is little more than *Battlezone* 'n' the hood, but it's still a fun action game.

OVERALL 6

\$ Value 6

Originality 4

Playability 7

Graphics 7

Music 7

Sound FX 6

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TerraNova: Strike Force Centauri

When I was a youngster, one of my favorite books was Robert Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*. It wasn't your stereotypical science-fiction story; it had nothing to do with the now common theme of politically correct explorers zooming about the galaxy, chasing down pointy-eared aliens and muttering about a "prime



An SFC dropship flies in to pick up your squad.

directive." *Starship Troopers* was military science fiction at its best: it told the tale of the Terran Mobile Infantry—a grizzled team of armor-clad soldiers locked in a life-and-death struggle to save the human race from extinction.

After spending a few days with *TerraNova: Strike Force Centauri*, I'd wager that the crew at Looking Glass

TECH BOX



Price: \$60

Media: compact disc

Developer: Looking Glass Technologies

Publisher: Looking Glass Technologies, 100 Cambridge Park Dr., Cambridge, MA 02140; 617.576.3310.

Website: <http://www.lglass.com>

Min. system req:
IBM PC Pentium, 60MHz
256-color SVGA graphics card
Mouse, MS-DOS 5.0
Sound Blaster or 100-percent-compatible sound card
2X CD-ROM drive
8 megabytes RAM



Sneaking around in a stolen PBA at a pirate base.



Technologies must be as fond of Heinlein's work as I am. Just like Heinlein's book, this game is a lock-and-load, rock-'n'-roll extravaganza from the word go. In *TerraNova*, you assume the role

of Nikola ap Io—a hard-charging 24th-century soldier assigned to Strike Force Centauri, which is an élite unit of soldiers equipped with powered battle armor (PBA). The heavy is played by the Hegemony—an Earth-based government that is attempting to unify all

the human colonies under its oppressive reign. You fight for the people of Alpha Centauri in a post-modern twist on the age-old "give me liberty or give me death" conflict between free-spirited colonists and an oppressive, spatially distant government.

You begin the game

This game is a lock-and-load, rock-'n'-roll extravaganza from the word go.

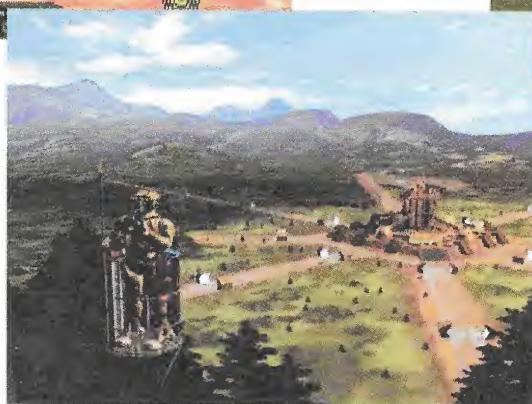
with a few practice missions in your combat armor. Maneuvering around the



gamespace is straightforward; there is robust support for the keyboard and a wide variety of joysticks. Moving Nikola around the battlefield reminded me of maneuvering a Mech in Activision's *MechWarrior 2*. Just as in that game, you often hit the battlefield with a number of computer-controlled



teammates at your disposal; they exhibit considerable intelligence, and you can give them a wide range of commands. These computer-controlled allies actually contribute mightily to the task at hand and act and behave intelligently—a rarity in computer gaming. Even better, Looking Glass is developing a multiplayer expansion pack that will let you replace those computer-controlled troopers with human players.



into more difficult missions, including Hegemony regulars and—most insidious of all—an army of genetically engineered cyborg clones reminiscent of the Borg in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. If you run out of missions, you can roll your own with the included scenario-creation utility.

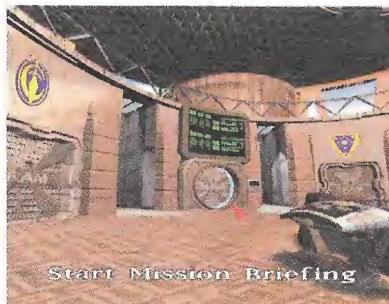
Graphically, *TerraNova* is a stunner. Although the game supports only 320 x 200 and 320 x 400 resolution, the terrain modeling is extremely impressive, and that makes geography a vital consideration in every combat mission you undertake. Throughout the game, a panoply of terrain types is displayed, including deserts, forests, canyons and

sive, and that makes geography a vital consideration in every combat mission you undertake. Throughout the game, a panoply of terrain types is displayed, including deserts, forests, canyons and



Gadgets galore: the personal shield is ready for action!

In addition to savvy squadmates, *TerraNova* treats you to all sorts of new technological enhancements you can use to upgrade your PBA. As the game unfolds, you can access new armor types (scout and heavy PBAs), new weaponry (such as the missile launcher and the railgun) and nifty new gadgets such as the personal shield, mine layer and the auto-turret. To test all this hardware, there are more than three dozen combat missions: they first consist of skirmishes and raids against pirates, and then escalate



populated areas. Layered over the terrain types are even more details, including rain, smoke, fog, lightning and other environmental effects. More than any other game in recent memory, *TerraNova* makes

you believe that you're actually there. On the downside, *TerraNova* does have its share of shortcomings. The plot has more holes than a golf course, and the acting quality in the digitized video segments never quite struggles above the mediocre mark.

GAME-PLAYING HINTS

- To reduce the damage your PBA takes, keep on the move. Vary your speed and direction often, and use side-to-side movement ("Z" and "C" keys), frequent jumping (SHIFT key) and your jump jets (SPACE-BAR) to keep those Hegemony Hogs guessing.
- Don't assault fixed enemy positions head-on; use the terrain to your advantage to outflank your enemies and attack them from the rear.

But all these gripes are sucked into the cold vacuum of space as I blast a Hegemony PBA with a railgun and watch it burst open like a thin-shelled piñata. Looking Glass could have created just another *Doom* clone, but they didn't, and computer-game buffs everywhere should thank them for that.

OVERALL

9

TERRANOVA: STRIKE FORCE CENTAURI

GENRE: action.

CONTENTS: deadly cyborgs, powered battle armor and an appetite for destruction.

HITS: addictive playability, stunning terrain effects and a scenario generator.

MISSES: no multiplayer options, no SVGA (640 x 480) graphics support and lukewarm acting talent.

LAST WORD: if you've always wanted to be a "Starship Trooper," *TerraNova* gives you the chance to blast bugs with the best.

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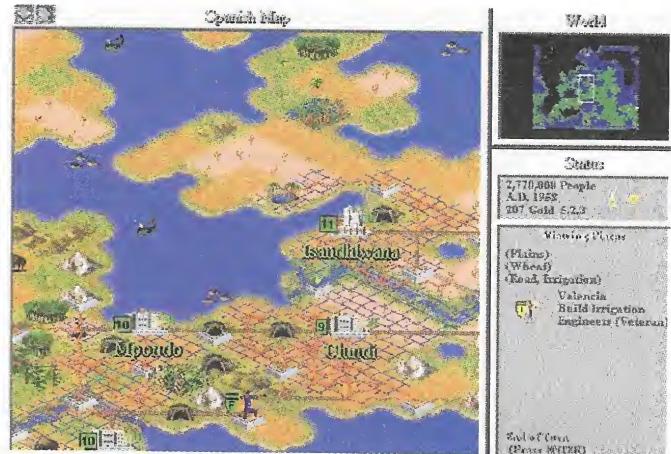
Sid Meier's Civilization II

Well, don't say I didn't warn you. If you value the time you spend with family, friends and hobbies other than computer gaming, you don't want this game. *Civilization* is back, and it's as addictive as ever. This remake of the 1991 Sid Meier classic strategy game should prove to be fun for veteran players and a bit daunting for new ones.

**Civilization is back, and it's
as addictive as ever.**

For the uninitiated: *Civilization* is a turn-based strategy game that simulates the development of people on Earth. This involves dealing with all aspects of the human adventure: war, peace, diplomacy, politics, economics, medicine, revolt and the exploration of space. It's incredibly fascinating.

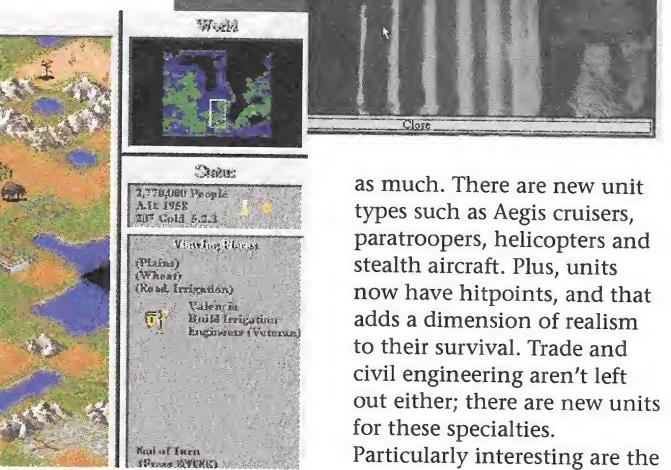
You begin your adventure with a small band of settlers and must establish a city and then build new troops and settlers to expand your nation. At first, it's a little like *Empire*, in which each new city can be used to develop



new units. It becomes much more than that. There's an intricate interplay between all the elements of *Civilization II*, and you can't just build a military and quash your opponents. For one thing, your city won't even grow unless you harvest food. Doing this, though, requires that you choose city sites ripe with vegetation. Then you have the problem of city morale. If too many people are sent to the fields, some will be unhappy. This

could lead to a revolt, which, in turn, cuts back on the productivity of the city and prevents you from building the units you need.

Civilization II provides the expected move to SVGA graphics and multimedia trimmings, but there are more than a smattering of improvements to go along. The AI is improved and does not cheat



The classic is back—with SVGA graphics, video clips, stronger AI, more unit types and the same great gameplay.

as much. There are new unit types such as Aegis cruisers, paratroopers, helicopters and stealth aircraft. Plus, units now have hitpoints, and that adds a dimension of realism to their survival. Trade and civil engineering aren't left out either; there are new units for these specialties. Particularly interesting are the new diplomacy features.

As you explore the world,

TECH BOX



Price: \$48.99

Media: CD-ROM

Developer: MicroProse

Publisher: MicroProse, 180 Lakefront Dr., Hunt Valley, MD 21030; 410.771.1151.

Website:
<http://www.microprose.com>

Min. system req:
IBM PC 486 DX, 33MHz
8 megabytes RAM
13 megabytes hard disk
SVGA graphics card
2X CD-ROM drive
Windows 3.1



(Click mouse to continue...)

you eventually meet other civilizations, and this opens the door to foreign relations. If you play your cards right, you can avoid war, or perhaps start one, or find ways to have others start them. New to *Civilization II* is the concept of

gamers. The designers of *Civilization II* paid close attention to the response to the original *Civilization*. For those who are new to *Civilization*, this is a great way to get a taste, though expert players might feel the game is still

Civilization underneath, despite the changes. Still, considering what a superb game *Civilization II* is, that's hardly any-

The greatest challenge in *Civilization II* is managing to balance exploration, population contentment, economics, scientific research and military strength.

Civilization II? Unlike most modern games, it comes with a nearly 200-page manual, and that still isn't enough. Thankfully, users have access to six skill levels and a tutorial, so finding an appropriate challenge should be possible. If you're still stymied,

Civilization II incorporates a built-in cheat menu. You also get help from your council of advisors, who communicate with you through a battery of video clips (you'll get a laugh out of the attitude advisor).

If that isn't enough, the support is excellent. Designer

GAME-PLAYING HINTS

There's no single best way to win; there are only general guidelines.

- Keep adding cities in well-chosen terrain.
- Use spies often.
- Particularly nice world wonders to acquire are: the Great Library, Statue of Liberty and da Vinci's Workshop. When you have the Statue of Liberty, you can easily switch forms of government—useful when you've discovered both democracy and fundamentalism.

Brian Reynolds frequents the online world and trades notes with gamers. In addition, MicroProse has already released two patches. About the only thing missing is multiplayer modes for those with network access.

Civilization II is a sparkling example of some of the best PC gaming has to offer. It's filled with replay value, is tremendously entertaining and is even educational. Whenever I start to suffer platform envy over the Sony PlayStation, all I have to do is to think about *Civilization II*.

reputation. The artificial intelligence will record things you do, and if it knows you aren't trustworthy, it will act accordingly.

There's hardly a piece of the game that hasn't been improved, and many of the changes were prompted by

thing to scoff at.

I've read some reports that seasoned *Civilization* gamers have no problem beating the AI, but I had a hard time at King level and above. It takes time to learn the complexities of the product, but it's good fun. How complex is

Choosing a government type is important. Some provide better environments for military conquest, while others are better for the economy, or enhancing citizen morale.

OVERALL

8

SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION II

GENRE: strategy.

CONTENTS: war, death, taxes, trade, conquered civilizations and wonders of the world.

HITS: highly playable and addictive; will keep you glued to your computer.

MISSES: basically the same game as the original; even the ending is the same.

LAST WORD: a must for those who have never played the original *Civilization*; if you were expecting a real sequel, you might just be a tad disappointed.

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Fantasy General

When SSI's *Panzer General* hit gaming shores more than a year ago, it was a watershed moment in the development of computer wargames. Prior to *Panzer General*, most wargames were loaded with jargon and obscure map symbols, which only retired military officers could understand. *Panzer General*—with its addictive playability and seamless interface—brought wargaming to the masses.

...more than 100 military units are at your disposal, ranging from lowly light-infantry units to powerful heroes and fire-breathing dragons.



Now SSI has released *Fantasy General*—a wargame that combines a swords-and-sorcery theme with the award-winning *Panzer General* game engine to target a new segment of the computer-game spectrum. Players who were

nonplussed by the Windows 95 treatment that *Allied General* received will be pleased to know that *Fantasy General* retains more of the "look and feel" of the original *Panzer General*

and behaves more like a sequel than *Allied General*.

Like *Panzer General*, the heart of *Fantasy General* is the campaign game. Instead of limiting players to one principal character, you can choose from among four campaign characters—the Archmage Krell, Lord Marcas, Sorceress Mordra and Knight Marshal Kalis. Each character brings a unique set of strengths and weaknesses to the table: Lord Marcas can recruit all infantry types at lower cost, and his fame and skill as a military commander allow him to have a large core army of experienced units; conversely, Sorceress Mordra's skill at summoning monsters allows her to recruit powerful beasts

TECH BOX



Price: \$60

Media: compact disc

Developer: Strategic Simulations Inc.

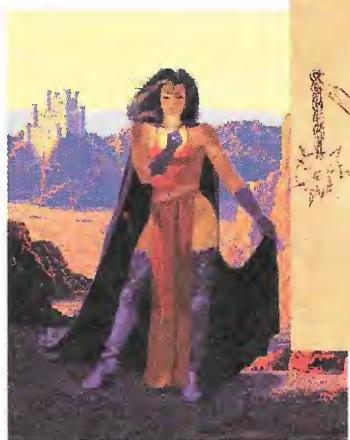
Publisher: Strategic Simulations Inc.,
675 Almanor Ave., Ste. 201,
Sunnyvale, CA 94086-2901;
408.737.6850

Website:
<http://www.SSIonline.com>

Min. system req:
IBM PC 386, 40MHz
Sound Blaster or 100-percent-compatible sound card, mouse
MS-DOS 5.0
1 megabyte SVGA graphics card
8 megabytes RAM
2 CD-ROM drives



Want to look like this guy? Play *Fantasy General*, and eat your spinach!



Morg the Slasher strikes out at a doomed unit of Goblin Scouts.

at the start of every battle. Your tactics will partly be dictated by the character you choose, and that adds a new dimension to gameplay. Your ultimate goal is to conquer five continents and de-throne the evil Shadowlord from his position of power.

To that end, more than 100 military units are at your disposal, ranging from lowly light-infantry units to powerful heroes and fire-breathing dragons.



Not all these units are available at once: at the outset, you have access to a meager allotment of modest units; but as the game unfolds, you can plow your gold reserves into unit research, working to make more powerful and effective units available. As well as the campaign game, you can play single-mission scenarios and roll-your-own conflicts in the "arena"—a random-scenario generator. Using the play-by-e-mail (PBEM) feature, you can even exchange saved games with a human opponent via your favorite online service, or the Internet.

Playability was paramount in *Panzer General*, and *Fantasy General* doesn't disappoint in

this department, either. The interface is slick and polished, and on a Pentium, map-scrolling and unit movement transpire at a blazing pace. One of the most stunning features of *Fantasy General* is the evocative background music. SSI enlisted the vocal talents of a

professional 36-voice choir to breathe life into soundtrack, and it shows. Without hesitation, I'd say it's some of the best music I've ever heard in a computer game.

If you think I sound as if I like *Fantasy General*, you're right, I do. But it isn't devoid of problems. Chief among my gripes is the one-sided campaign mode: just as with *Panzer General*, players can play campaign games from only one vantage point (although individual scenarios can still be played from either side). The sound effects are overly repetitive, and the selection of available game units is a bit haphazard. Instead of sticking to one predominant theme for the fantasy world, SSI liberally sprinkles units from all eras and cultures throughout:



Roman Legionnaires upgrade to Samurai, while Dragon Riders share the clouds with Sky Splitters—flying vehicles that seem to have zoomed in from an old "Flash Gordon" movie set. This doesn't detract from game playability at all, but fantasy-gaming purists may find the inconsistencies a bit hard to stomach.

Fantasy foibles aside, I can't dispute *Fantasy General*'s value as a strategy game. SSI has retained all the core elements that made *Panzer General* so popular and infused *Fantasy General* with enough new concepts and ideas to make it a success on its own merits. If you loved *Panzer General* and don't mind swapping Panthers for Pegasi, *Fantasy General* should be the next game on your "buy" list.

GAME-PLAYING HINTS

- Many of the magic items and gold rewards hidden in shrines are randomly allocated; save your game before moving a unit onto them, then if you don't like what you find, reload the game and try again.
- Remember the strengths and weaknesses of your units: most magical troops are vulnerable to attack by mechanical ones, while light infantry and skirmishers fight best in rough terrain.

OVERALL

8

\$ Value	8
Originality	7
Playability	9
Graphics	8
Music	10
Sound FX	7

FANTASY GENERAL

GENRE: strategy.

CONTENTS: Grimal the Rat Lord, Morg the Slasher, berserk barbarians and the evil Shadowlord.

HITS: excellent playability, stunning music and novel campaign design.

MISSES: limited to one side in campaign play; disjointed assortment of combat units.

LAST WORD: a highly playable fantasy twist on *Panzer General*.

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Command & Conquer: The Covert Operations

If you've been anticipating the release of new missions for Westwood's *Command & Conquer*, the wait is over. *C&C* made its debut last September and managed to become one of 1995's top strategy games. The only problem was that gamers craved more, and as we know, all good things come to an end. At least, that's usually the case. But game designers, like movie directors, can always make a sequel.



C&C: The Covert Operations is a set of new missions that are installed over the original *C&C*.

The Covert Operations are just as addictive as the original missions. Unfortunately though, they are nowhere as easy as in the original game. These missions are designed for *C&C* hardcore pros. If you're new to *C&C*, you might be turned off by their difficulty. If you feel up to the challenge, just be sure you have a few free hours to play each scenario—and that's being conservative. As well as being ridiculously difficult, each scenario map is also a lot bigger than those found on the original CDs. You'll get your chance to do plenty of exploring.

Graphically, the only thing new in this set of game missions are the rendered cinematics; and just like the old ones,



they're as good as ever.

Whoever does Westwood's 3-D graphics animations is one of the best animators in the industry. On this CD, there's a demo for Westwood's soon-to-be-released *C&C: Red Alert* that will blow your socks off. Also, to go along with the missions, there are a few new techno musical scores, which tend to get stale and get on your nerves after a while.

C&C: The Covert Operations is more good conquering fun. But if you're a novice at this game, it will drive you up the wall; it's very tough. On the other hand, if, like me, you're a *C&C* lunatic, you'll want to drop the bucks on this baby. Just remember, you'll need to quench your *C&C* thirst until *Red Alert* comes out, and these missions will do just that.



C&C: THE COVERT OPERATIONS

GENRE: strategy.

CONTENTS: missions from hell, more mayhem, more cool cinematics and more sleepless nights.

HITS: plenty of new missions; highly playable.

MISSES: every mission is incredibly difficult to beat.

LAST WORD: a must for those who are into *C&C*; just don't expect to see any major new innovations in the game, but remember, this is an add-on disc.

TECH BOX



Price: \$29.95

Media: compact disc

Developer: Westwood Studios

Publisher: Virgin Interactive Entertainment, 18061 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92714; 800.974.4607

Website:
<http://www.vie.com>

Min. system req:
IBM PC 486, 66MHz
MS-DOS 5.0
2X CD-ROM drive
20 megabytes hard disk

OVERALL 8

\$ Value 8

Originality 5

Playability 8

Graphics 9

Music 7

Sound FX 7

Comanche Mac

A certified PC hit, *Comanche* has finally arrived for the Mac. As any Mac gamer will attest, titles of this stature don't exactly pop up every day—or every few months, for that matter. And in the world of simulations, *Comanche* is



Finally, a flight-sim worthy of Macintosh Power PC technology.

indeed supreme.

I won't bore you with yawn-inducing, overdrawn plot details. Let's just say it's 1999, and you've gotta stop evil Third-World countries from developing and deploying nuclear arms. The game can be played via keyboard or mouse (not recommended), but it supports myriad joysticks. The abundant cockpit control options are well-balanced—

enough to satisfy the most diehard flight-sim fanatics, but not so overwhelming that they frustrate typical gamers. Along with standard pitch, roll and yaw controls, you can also achieve "ground effect" by cruising at low altitude.

In terms of weapons, you've got everything from standard 20mm cannons to Hellfire missiles and, in some instances, even MLRS, or "steel rain," which packs one hell of a punch by blanketing the "badies" with thousands of explosives. There are some nifty little defensive maneuvers as well. If you're being tracked, your onboard defense system ejects "reflective chaff" to confuse enemy radar screens. In addition, whenever your onboard computer yells "Incoming," you can send out a flare as a decoy to trick enemy missiles into following it instead of you. In some of the tougher missions, there is "wingman" support. During hairy situations, you can call on your comrade in the sky to assist you.



As the terrain scales toward you, ground surfaces become less foggy, thanks to some great haze effects.

When it comes to graphics and if you're Power-Mac-equipped, you're in for a treat. But if you have anything less than a Power Mac, you're in trouble. At one point, I had it running on a Quadra 610 and the strain was evident: choppy graphics rendering. But, hey, if you qualify, you're in for a real treat. Several viewpoints are available on the fly, including forward, left, right and rear

cockpit views, as well as panoramic, chase and drop-camera views. You also have night-vision capability: for after-hours missions, the Comanche will automatically display the environment in shades of green. Every last detail is here, and it looks



phenomenal with a smooth frame rate. This Mac version even includes a couple of graphics goodies that weren't in the original PC game. Water reflections and haze effects can be turned on, and they add substantially to the terrain's realism.

How about flaws? Some of the sound effects are pretty weak. But with beautifully detailed graphics and great music, along with 100 missions to engage in, this is a great overall package that you won't be able to beat overnight (more bang for your buck). If you're lookin' for something new to blow up on your Mac, *Comanche Mac* delivers the goods bigtime.

COMANCHE MAC

GENRE: simulation.

CONTENTS: slick FMV cinematics, gorgeously rendered real-time graphics and 100 missions. And, of course, blowing stuff up is a great tension-releaser.

HITS: great game engine; richly detailed.

MISSES: if you don't have high-end hardware, the game suffers enormously.

LAST WORD: if you're looking for a great chopper sim for your game-starved Mac, this one's a must-try. Even if you aren't into sims, you should check it out.



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TECH BOX



Media: compact disc

Developer: NovaLogic

Publisher: NovaLogic,
26010 Mureau Rd., Ste.
200, Calabasas, CA 91320;
818.880.1997

Website:
<http://www.novalogic.com>

Min. system req:
Mac 68030 or Power PC
System 7
8 megabytes RAM
2X CD-ROM drive
8-bit color monitor
Quicktime 2.0 required for
music

OVERALL

8

\$ Value 9

Originality 5

Playability 8

Graphics 9

Music 8

Sound FX 4

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Silent Hunter

From the bow of his destroyer, the captain glimpses the lights of a distant port. Glancing backward, he watches the trailing convoy as they near their destination. Starboard of the lead ship, glistening in the moonlight as they move quietly to intercept, two frothy wakes break the sea's calm surface. The silence is shattered by two deafening explosions accompanied by a violent lurch.

What really gives *Silent Hunter* the extra league over most other sub sims are its plethora of historical missions and its full campaign mode.

Amid shouts, fire and chaos, the dazed captain works his way upright. As his ship sinks, he watches as the rest of the convoy is destroyed by the unseen, dreaded, silent hunter.

Starting with the MicroProse original classic *Silent Service*, silent hunters were brought to life in a realistic, compelling submarine warfare game. Over a decade

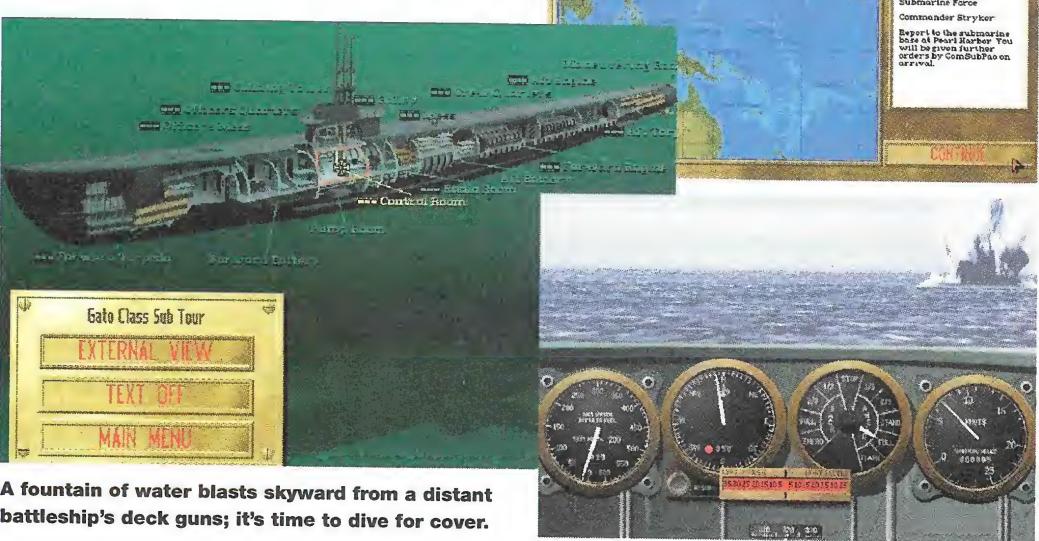


has passed since then, and a number of other submarine simulators, from *Wolfpack* to the most recent *Aces of the Deep*, have surfaced. And now a new sub simulator glides into the pack in SSI's *Silent Hunter*.

As with most of its type, *Silent Hunter* doesn't really add much originality to the overall World War II submarine simulator genre. Of course, that isn't a real fault, because nothing really original can now be added to a realistic submarine game; it has all been done. But

Silent Hunter does offer refined, solid, long-lasting playability and beautiful SVGA graphics.

Skipping from depth gauges to the periscope is as easy as clicking on the lower icon menu, which makes jumping about the submarine's various control panels and between the main cabin and bridge a breeze. It's easy to move from the bridge, glance at the navigation



A fountain of water blasts skyward from a distant battleship's deck guns; it's time to dive for cover.

TECH BOX



Price: \$59.95

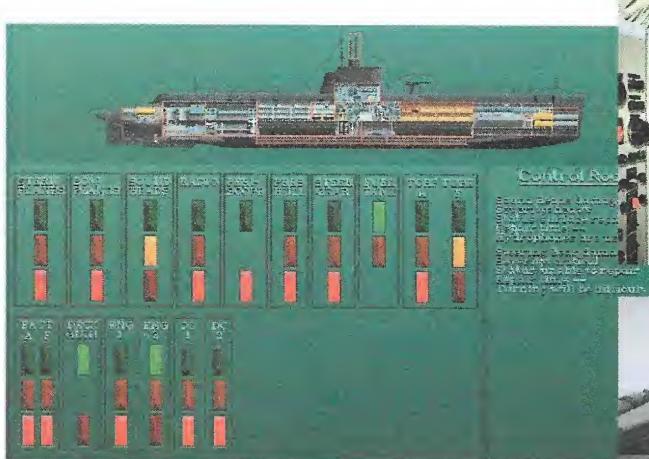
Media: compact disc

Developer: Aeon Software

Publisher: SSI, 675 Almanor Ave., Ste. 201, Sunnyvale, CA 94086; 408.737.6800

Website:
<http://www.SSIonline.com>

Min. system req:
IBM PC 486, 66MHz
SVGA graphics card
8 megabytes RAM
22 megabytes hard disk



Whenever your sub is damaged, check the damage table to determine what still works and how long repairs will take.

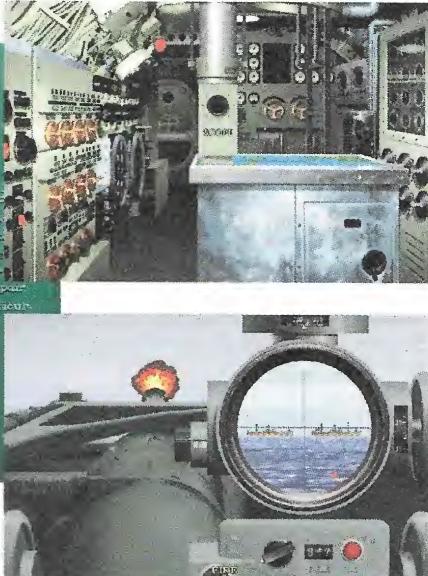
charts, plot a course, dive to 40 feet and up-periscope in very short order. Or you can use the hot key functions to fly between everything. Time can also be compressed by up to 16 times, so you can set your heading and arrive at your destination quickly.

The only slightly sophisticated system that takes a little time to learn is the adjusting and arming of the torpedoes to set perfect intercept courses; but, even here, the game gives you everything you need to know and doesn't bog you down with cumbersome mathematics.

Whether you're zooming in on a convoy through the

periscope, or watching the ships grow more and more detailed, or simply admiring the parallaxing light blue waves off the bridge, *Silent Hunter*'s SVGA graphics are better than any submarine simulator's to date. Explosions and ship sinkings are also well-animated.

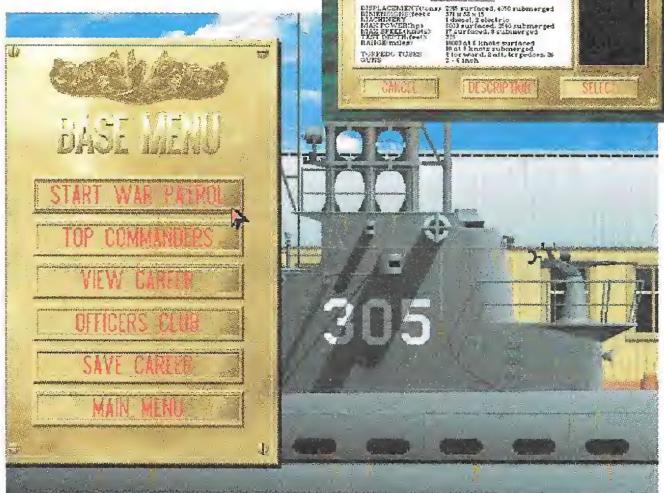
From the whoosh of a torpedo to the blast of the deck gun, the sound effects are good, but not too varied; you only hear so many things on a submarine, after all. Oddly missing is music, which would have helped add to the overall gaming experience, but SSI apparently took the "silent" part of *Silent Hunter*



very seriously.

What really gives *Silent Hunter* the extra league over most other sub sims are its plethora of historical missions and its full campaign mode. If you want to see how you'd do against a pack of destroyers with patrol boats dumping depth charges about you, you can also model your own missions. It's easy to set your crew's experience level, the weather and wave conditions, time of day and what you're up against, so you're underwater and ready for action in no time.

Selecting the Sub Tour from the main menu lets you examine a submarine from its aft torpedoes all the way to its forward torpedoes—and everything in between.



GAME-PLAYING HINTS

■ Before you rush out to sink your first ship, be sure you know just how to sink it. Nothing is more embarrassing than to watch your torpedoes miss a mile behind the aft deck of a targeted destroyer. You'll need to learn how to use your Torpedo Data Computer (TDC) before you can start littering the bottom of the sea with vessels. Somewhat intimidating at first, you'll find that the TDC is actually quite easy when you—yes—read the section in the manual on using it. Otherwise, you'll be frustrated and won't be able to hit the biggest carrier broadside without the nose of your submarine hitting it first.

■ Keep in mind that most ships can outrun your submarine, so don't try to sneak up behind them.

■ When you see a ship heading your way on your navigation charts, plot a tangential intercept course to try to meet it with its broadside facing your submarine. After all, the bigger the target the better.

With its involving playability, longevity and detailed SVGA graphics, *Silent Hunter* is easily the most polished submarine simulator to date; and although it really isn't that original, it manages to sink the competition with numerous missions, a campaign mode and intuitive, fast gameplay.

SILENT HUNTER

GENRE: submarine simulation.

CONTENTS: submarines, destroyers, carriers and plenty of torpedoes.

HITS: fast, intuitive play and loads of missions.

MISSES: not very original.

LAST WORD: good sub simulations are hard to come by. *Silent Hunter* fills that void and manages to deliver tons of playability in the process.

OVERALL

9

\$ Value 9

Originality 6

Playability 9

Graphics 9

Music N/A

Sound FX 8

BY BERNARD DY

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Silent Thunder: A-10 Tank Killer II

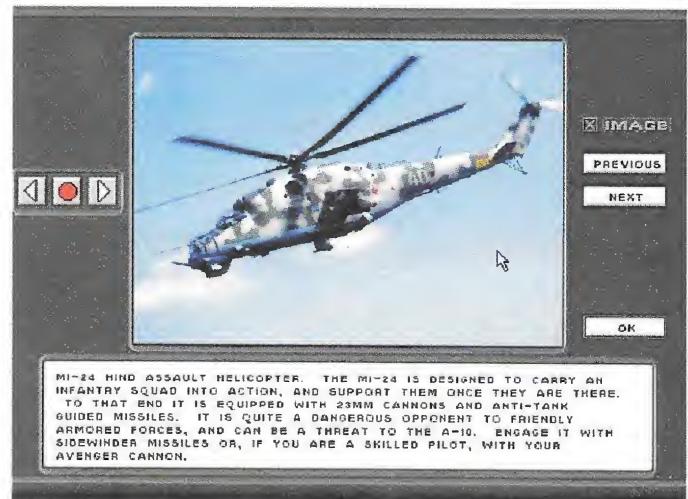
Sierra makes no pretenses about it. *Silent Thunder* was designed to be an action-based simulator—not a purist sim game. In fact, a promotional piece that came with the game calls it, "a hot, action-packed number." What, exactly, does this mean to the consumer besides being both similar to the original and action-based? Probably that gamers who disliked the first title will dislike this game

Without a doubt, this action sim's strongest point is its graphics.

for the same reason.

If you played the original, you might recall that it had some of the details of a real-life A-10 Thunderbolt's roles and weaponry, but that it also had a very rudimentary flight model that lacked realism. *Silent Thunder* has a nearly identical model to its predecessor, and the A-10 handles more like an automobile than an aircraft. So while the purists scoff at it, the question remains: will the rest of the population enjoy it?

If you're among the lucky population of Pentium owners



MI-24 HIND ASSAULT HELICOPTER. THE MI-24 IS DESIGNED TO CARRY AN INFANTRY SQUAD INTO ACTION, AND SUPPORT THEM ONCE THEY ARE THERE. TO THAT END, IT IS EQUIPPED WITH 23MM CANNONS AND ANTI-TANK GUIDED MISSILES. IT IS QUITE A DANGEROUS OPPONENT TO FRIENDLY ARMORED FORCES, AND CAN BE A THREAT TO THE A-10. ENGAGE IT WITH SIDEWINDER MISSILES OR, IF YOU ARE A SKILLED PILOT, WITH YOUR AVENGER CANNON.

Silent Thunder is the name the Iraqis gave the A-10 Thunderbolt II, because it was able to quietly sneak up on them.

and you like less complicated flight sims, then this Windows 95 game will prove to be entertaining. Unlike Spectrum HoloByte's *Top Gun: Fire at Will*, which is more of a realistic sim, *Silent Thunder* is really about shooting and blowing up things.

Without a doubt, this action sim's strongest point is its graphics. Unfortunately, to really enjoy the hi-res graphics, you absolutely must have a Pentium-based machine running at least at 133MHz. I could do little more than sightseeing on my 486 DX2/80 and

that was at lo-res with all details disabled. The system crawled whenever I got engaged in a furball or with other targets and surface-to-air missiles. Luckily, a sympathetic friend let me try the game on his Pentium 166, and the detail proved to be excellent. *Silent Thunder* has some of the nicest terrain I've seen in a flight sim—not quite as good, perhaps, as those found in *EF2000*, but more varied, with jutting mountains and desert dunes; jungle canyons are particularly impressive to fly in.

Did I say jungle canyon?

TECH BOX



Price: \$59.95

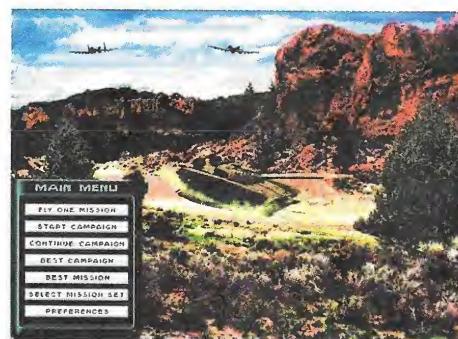
Media: compact disc

Developer: Dynamix

Publisher: Sierra, 3380 146th Pl. SE, Ste. 300, Bellevue, WA 98007; 206.649.9800.

Website:
<http://www.sierra.com>

Min. system req:
IBM PC 486 DX2, 66MHz
Windows 95
8 megabytes RAM
35 megabytes hard disk
SVGA graphics card
2X CD-ROM drive



You'll play the role of an élite Air Force pilot asked to participate in a war on drugs. You were selected because your flying skills are superb, but also because you work best alone.





Incredible SVGA terrain awaits you, if you have a fast machine to run it on.

What am I doing, flying in a narrow canyon?—dogfighting, of course, and in an A-10, no less. As I said, toss reality out the window here; it's a fictitious Hollywood aces' paradise. You get access to an impressive array of ordnance—probably the most realistic thing in *Silent Thunder*. Purists will again be frustrated by the implementation of weapon firing. You have full control over the powerful Avenger cannon, but all other weapons, even dumb fire weapons, won't release until a lock has been obtained on the target. The need for a lock-on delay is appropriate for guided missiles like Mavericks, but both unrealistic and frustrating for those accustomed to having quick response weapons. There were

times I could have used a fast-firing salvo of dumb rockets. This seems wrong for a game that's supposed to emphasize action.

Threats, on the other hand, are real enough. *Silent Thunder* doesn't lack action or danger. Hilltops and valleys alike are spotted with all kinds of enemy SAMs and AA guns. I did indeed have fun playing once the game had been installed on the fast machine. Audio-capable machines will have voice and sound effects added to bolster the experience. In addition to the terrain graphics, explosions and other vehicles are nicely done. Despite seeming ridiculous, it was exciting to dodge SAMs and dogfight MiG-29s in canyons. It's just too bad that consumers have to pay \$60



for what is primarily a graphics update. If *Silent Thunder* had a toggle for realistic flight and weapons modeling, it could have appealed to a much larger audience.

I cannot recommend this title to strict sim fans, nor to anyone with less than a Pentium-based system. If you like aircraft simulation games, however, *Silent Thunder* is currently one of your two available choices featuring contemporary aircraft. It definitely provides the hard-rocking soundtrack and stunning graphics action gamers want. Just be aware of the game's limitations.

GAME-PLAYING HINTS

- Use your map feature to help you take different routes to your targets. Sometimes, flying in a straight line to the target is not the best way, unless you're under a time constraint.
- Use the terrain to shield your A-10 from SAMs and antiaircraft fire.
- Different routes can also provide better weapon-release angles or opportunities.



OV-10 BRONCO SPOTTER PLANE. THE OV-10'S PRIMARY FUNCTION IS TO LOCATE AND MARK TARGETS FOR FRIENDLY AIR OR ARTILLERY STRIKES. ITS PRIMARY ARMAMENT IS THEREFORE THE SMOKE ROCKET, ALTHOUGH ON OCCASION OV-10'S WILL BE EQUIPPED WITH SMALL BOMBS AND AUTOMATIC WEAPONS FOR USE AGAINST UNPROTECTED ENEMY GROUND TROOPS.

OVERALL 7

\$ Value	7
Originality	6
Playability	7
Graphics	9
Music	10
Sound FX	8

SILENT THUNDER: A-10 TANK KILLER II

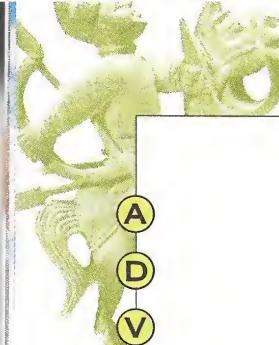
GENRE: simulation.

CONTENTS: Top Gun (the movie) in an A-10.

HITS: great graphics and plenty of action-based missions.

MISSES: unrealistic flight model.

LAST WORD: not for flight-sim purists, but for more action-oriented gamers who aren't interested in the mechanics of a simulation.



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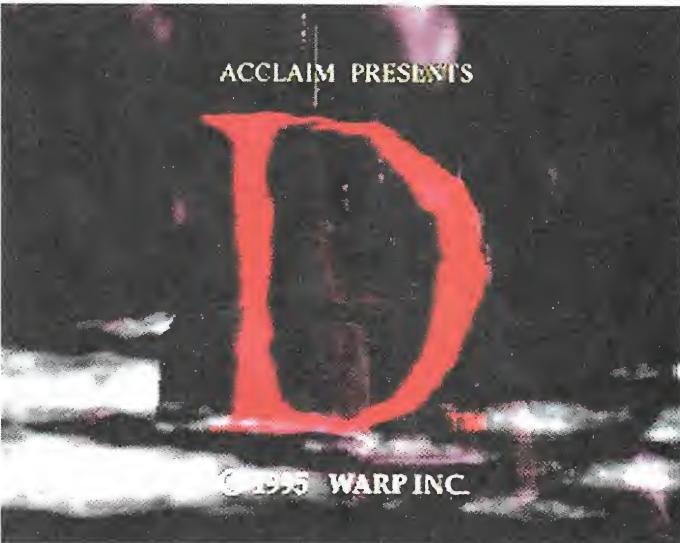
As the video-game industry makes the awkward transition from 16-bit to 32-bit technology—kind of like when I went through puberty—the larger video-game companies are fleeing to the (relative) safety of the PC CD-ROM market.

The latest refugee is Acclaim Entertainment, which had the mega-hot *Mortal Kombat* license, but lost it early last year when Williams Entertainment opened their own video-game



...you steer Laura around the castle as she solves puzzles,
suffers flashbacks to a traumatic childhood event...

division. Since then, Acclaim have used their Scrooge McDuck-size piles of funds to churn out games left and right, hoping that one of them turns out to be halfway



decent. *D* is one if their first PC products, and much like Elizabeth Berkley's performance in *Showgirls*, it isn't exactly a stunning debut.

D tells the story of Richter and Laura Harris—the most twisted father-and-daughter team this side of the Appalachians. Richter Harris, the chief medical dude at Los Angeles National Hospital, has

the fabric of reality (I hate those) pulls her into a building with a distinctly castle-like look and feel.

That's where the interaction begins: you steer Laura around the castle as she solves puzzles, suffers flashbacks to a traumatic childhood event (which are triggered by—I



gone a bit bonkers, gunning down everyone in sight and holing up inside the building. Laura Harris is brought in to talk sense into Dad, but as she enters the hospital, a rip in

TECH BOX



Price: \$49.95

Media: compact disc

Developer: Warp Inc.

Publisher: Acclaim Entertainment, One Acclaim Plaza, Glen Cove, NY 11542; 516.759.7800

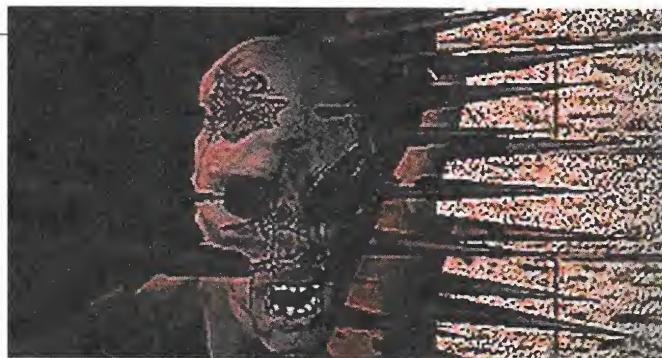
Min. system req:
IBM PC 486 DX2, 66MHz
2X CD-ROM drive or better
MS-DOS 5.0 or higher
SVGA graphics card
8 megabytes RAM
4 megabytes hard disk



You don't find out what the *D* stands for until the end of the game, but I'll give you a hint: it ain't "dramatic finale."

swear I'm not making this up—glowing cockroaches) and has occasional encounters with her father's astral projection.

Uh, when I use the word "puzzle," I use it loosely; most of the game's roughly dozen "puzzles" involve finding an item in one place and using it at the only other place where you could use it. There's no thought and barely any interaction involved; it's mostly just a point-and-click scavenger hunt through the castle. And the few puzzles that do require a little more effort are still damn obvious to anyone but the very young and the very dead. You might not

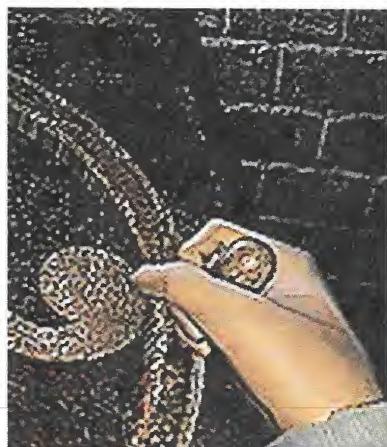
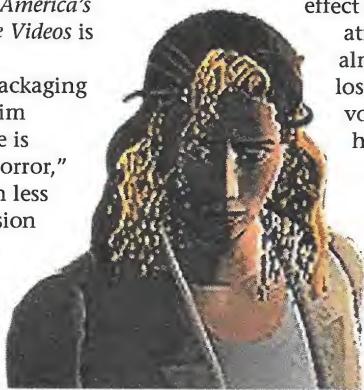


D was originally developed by Japanese developer Warp Inc. for the 3DO; Acclaim bought the U.S. rights to the PC CD-ROM version because they have more money than they know what do with.

make it all the way through the game on your first try, but you'll definitely beat it on your second, which will take four or five hours, tops.

All the visuals in *D* are computer-generated full-motion video (presented in the ever-popular wind-screen format), so the simple act of turning in a new direction takes nearly 10 seconds as the CD loads in the animation frames. The video is of decent quality, and there are a couple of good gross-outs, but after a while, you just want Laura to get *on* with it. I also have to give a special Raspberry Award to *D*'s bad voice acting, which, according to *Computer Player's* crack research staff, is one of the signs of the Apocalypse. (The continued popularity of *America's Funniest Home Videos* is another.)

While *D*'s packaging makes the claim that this game is "interactive horror," it applies even less to the PC version than it did to the 3DO version. With the 3DO,



Every last pixel in *D* is computer-generated—no cheesy blue-screen footage, no big-budget sets, just a world existing only on a bunch of hard drives. Kinda cool.

you're (probably) parked in front of a 27-inch TV with surround sound; with the PC, you're parked in front of a 14-inch monitor with a 16-bit sound card. The dramatic effect of the game's atmosphere is almost entirely lost even before the voice acting from hell kicks in.

D's slow pace and spooky nature are unique in the twitch-obsessed video-game market; but on the IBM PC, which has *Myst* and its millions of variable-quality imitators, *D* is a very bad joke. If you really have some sick craving for "interactive horror," either buy yourself some psychotherapy or Take 2's *Ripper*. *D* ain't nothin' but three CDs of tedious FMV and a dozen puzzles that would insult Forrest Gump's intelligence.

GAME-PLAYING HINTS

■ You can't die in "*D*," but you're on a time limit; if the clock runs out before you finish the game, it's back to the beginning. (You also get one of the game's three endings.) Don't take too long to move around or make decisions.

■ The most unusual features in "*D*" are the four glowing bugs hidden away in various locations. When you stumble upon a bug, you watch a kooky flashback sequence from Laura's childhood. Each bug reveals a more explicit flashback than the last. The catch is that the bugs don't appear in the same locations from game to game, and sometimes, they don't show up at all. Here's where we've found each of the four bugs (these locations are also mentioned in the walkthroughs of each disk below):

The first bug is either next to the front door or in the chest of drawers.

The second bug is either between the marble busts or on the bookshelf.

The third bug is either in the garden fountain or underneath the first door in the room with the crank.

The fourth bug is always at the end of the dark hallway at the top of the castle.

OVERALL 5

\$ Value 4

Originality 6

Playability 5

Graphics 7

Music 6

Sound FX 6

GENRE: adventure.

CONTENTS: floating heads, flowing blood and glowing bugs.

HITS: somewhat spooky atmosphere.

MISSES: super-simple puzzles; god-awful voice "acting."

LAST WORD: there are oodles of more impressive "interactive horror" games than this.

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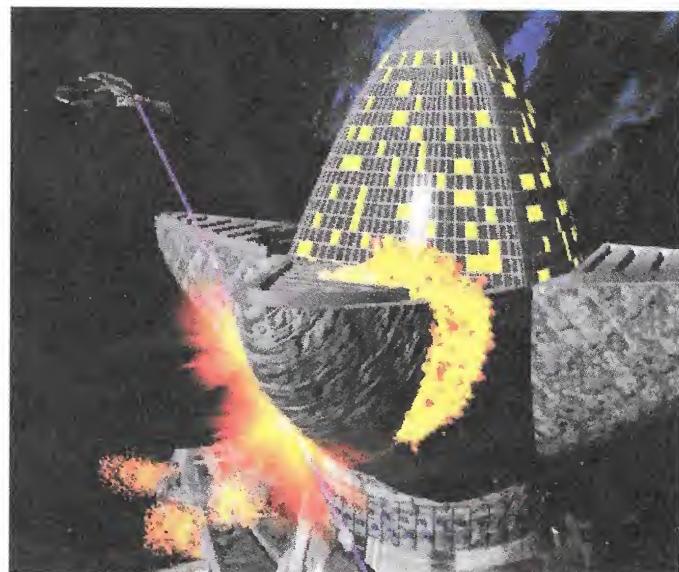
Star Trek: Deep Space Nine—Harbinger

I accepted my assignment as envoy with trepidation. Being chosen as a delegate to the Scythians—an enigmatic race from the Gamma Quadrant—filled me with pride. But I was also concerned, because I knew that much uncertainty—even danger—was involved in venturing into the Dominion's playground. Then there was Ambassador Karrig—head of the delegation. We didn't exactly see eye to eye on diplomatic etiquette, especially regarding when to stop waving the flag of diplomacy in favor of wielding fully charged phasers; recognizing that instant would mean the difference between life and death.

As a fan of all that is *Trek*, I

...most gamers will still come away pleased to have had the experience, except for that blasted maze!

eagerly anticipated being beamed aboard Deep Space Nine and cavorting with Sisko, Odo, Kira and the rest of her crew, especially given my disappointment with Spectrum HoloByte's *Star Trek: TNG "A Final Unity."* I'm pleased to report that my journey to the Gamma Quadrant was interesting and enjoyable; *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*—



Harbinger is the best *Trek* yet in the *Next Generation* line.

with the Scythians. Embarking on this mission of diplomacy and defense, Bannik must stave off attacks from deadly drones and unravel the mysteries of murder, deception and the prophesied Harbinger that await DS9's residents. As for the crew, only Sisko, Odo, Kira, Dax and Quark are on hand to assist. The rest of DS9's inhabitants, except for a half dozen miscellaneous beings, have been conveniently evacuated from the station because of a plasma storm.

Among DS9's strengths is consistency in design and appearance—chief weaknesses of *A Final Unity*. Because I'm visually oriented and ocular-retentive, I really disliked the menagerie of visual elements in *A Final Unity*. Its 3-D-rendered and 2-D hand-drawn imagery provided an incongruous feel and slapped the player into and out of reality—a reminder that it was only an imaginary world. Fortunately, the designers of DS9 avoided this pitfall. Even though the crew could have stood some graphic refinement to better

TECH BOX



Price: \$59.95

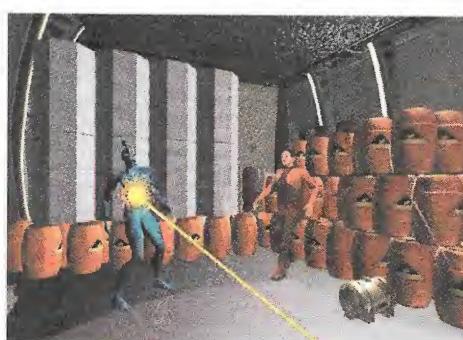
Media: compact disc

Developer: Stormfront Studios

Publisher: Viacom New Media, 1515 Broadway, New York, NY 10036; 800.469.2539

Website: <http://www.viacomnewmedia.com>

Min. system req:
IBM PC 486 DX, 66MHz
2X CD-ROM drive
8 megabytes RAM
10 megabytes hard disk
MS-DOS 5.0
VESA compliant SVGA
video card
Sound-Blaster-compatible
sound card



On occasion, even shapeshifters such as Odo benefit from friendly phaser fire.



Gene Roddenberry, the player assumes the role of Federation envoy Bannik—a Tirion delegate on a “first contact” meeting



match their TV counterparts—especially Kira and Dax—the world of *DS9* is consistent, lavish and beautiful.

The only criticism I can level against it is that it suffers from a mild case of *Myst* syndrome—a gorgeous world with nary a soul living in it. Still, with capable music and sound effects, excellent voice acting (by the original cast) and a strong storyline, *DS9*'s atmosphere is authentic.

Gameplay is simple and mostly requires that you be in the right place at the right time. Interaction with other characters is smooth, if somewhat predictable, using conversation that includes programmed questions and responses. Most players will have no struggle with this, or with the game's logical and straightforward puzzles. However, unlike most adventures, there's no inventory to manage; at most, Bannik carries two items. The arcade segments of play include three difficulty levels.

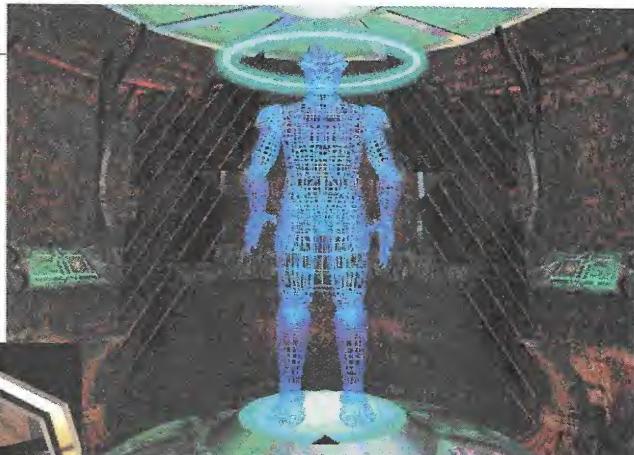
Of course, *DS9* is not without idiosyncrasies and weak-



From Ops, Dax and Sisko try unsuccessfully to communicate with Rhoon, the mysterious Scythian delegate.

nesses. For one, facial expressions are totally lacking: each character projects the same expressionless stare regardless of emotional state. Also, all the dialogue is spoken without a text toggle, and that prohibits the hearing impaired from enjoying the game. The major failing is the Drone Maze—a multi-level labyrinth of walkways patrolled by laser-armed drones. For the most part, I think mazes are simply a lazy designer's way to lengthen gameplay, serving little purpose other than to annoy players. The Drone Maze is an exercise in frustration, and the player is forced to traverse it *three* times, and the attack drones are replenished after each journey through!

Nonetheless, *DS9* is a solid, enjoyable excursion into the far reaches of space, and it offers *Star Trek* aficionados and adventure fans an entertaining diversion with only minor annoyances. Its interface is intuitive, the storyline is engaging, and gameplay is primarily bug-free. It does run



under Windows 95, but it can be a bit glitchy with momentary lags, loss of sound and lock-ups after the deletion of save files. Even though its ending is a bit anti-climactic, most gamers will still

come away pleased to have had the experience, except for that blasted maze!

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine—Harbinger maintains a high level of consistency in play and remains faithful to the *Trek* mythos. This eminently approachable title will appeal to most *Star Trek* fans and adventure gamers. With an average play time of 18 to 20 hours—more if you select higher difficulty levels, few will be disappointed to have signed on for duty at DS9.



Havik, a power-hungry Scythian holoprogram, is not the only nemesis facing DS9 and the crew.

GAME-PLAYING HINTS

■ In space arcade sequences, lead your target, and fire as it nears your cross-hairs.

■ Once you've learned of the Lykotian cloaking device, make tracks for Karrig's quarters, or prepare to die a grisly, gooey death.

■ To restore power to the run-about's transporter, solve the Conduit Puzzle by routing the three middle power feeds through the same central connector (without a directional arrow) so that each line begins and ends with the same color terminator.

■ In the Citadel Drone Maze, both reactors must be powered up before you can reactivate the station's power system.

OVERALL 8

\$ Value	8
Originality	7
Playability	7
Graphics	9
Music	7
Sound FX	8

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE-HARBINGER

GENRE: adventure.

CONTENTS: traditional *Star Trek*, phasers, murder, exploration, aliens, limited combat and puzzles.

HITS: adjustable difficulty level, consistent storyline and graphics, strong atmosphere, true to the *Trek* universe.

MISSES: very few nonplayer characters; atrocious and repetitive maze.

LAST WORD: solid gameplay, familiar characters and an engaging plot make *DS9* a requisite play for all *Star Trek* fans.

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Kingdom O' Magic

Making people laugh is hard; making people laugh during a game is even harder. Too often, games that try to be funny wind up being corny, or just really stupid. Jokes and one-liners pop up in inexplicable ways and in unlikely situations. When you try to incorporate humor into a role-playing game, the task is even greater. How can you make

A good example of this humor comes during your first encounter with a Ringwraith. [The narrator] finishes his narrative by saying, "...feel pity for this poor creature. Or kill him. Who am I to tell you how to play this game?"

people laugh while they're completing a quest? In *Kingdom O' Magic*, the rather bizarre team of programmers over at SCI seems to have found the answer using a point-and-click interface. Players are thrust into the shoes of either Thidney—a talking lizard, or Sha-Ron—a sexy female elf. You can choose from one of three quests: the Traditional Quest, the Bizarre and Slightly Twisted Quest, or the Magnificent 7-11 Quest. Each quest requires that you visit most of the game's 105 scenes and will keep you laughing all the way.

In terms of gameplay, the most appealing aspect of this title is its interface.



the screen, it turns into an open chest labeled "Inventory." Just click when this icon appears, and you'll get a full list of what you have. Using items is just as easy.

Whenever there is anything on-

There is no confusion about what you should do. When your pointer (in the shape of a

screen with which you can interact, the interface will let you know via a spark on your pointer. The actual play of an RPG has never been this easy.

Graphically, *KOM* definitely holds its own. Each of the 105 locations you can visit is beautifully drawn in 3-D. You won't believe how much detail is in some of these areas. This attention to detail and high-quality 3-D artwork really makes you feel as if you're controlling a cartoon. The animation of the characters as they interact with these 3-D environments isn't quite as impressive. In certain instances, the Ringwraiths

gloved hand) passes over something it can touch, it begins to spark. When it passes over a possible exit, it changes into a wooden exit sign, and text appears at the bottom of the screen telling you where the exit leads. You want to use something in your inventory?—no problem. As you drag your pointer to the bottom of



The Dirty Great Axe



The lovely Sha-Ron smooth talks some guards.

and elves look like walking pieces of spaghetti. To be fair, though, the animation of falling leaves in the Leafy Glade is breathtaking. A very nice graphic element of this game is the narrator: periodically,

TECH BOX



Media: compact disc

Developer: SCI

Publisher: SCI, 330 Washington Blvd. #713, Marina del Rey, CA 90292; 310.577.1518.

Min. system req:
IBM PC 486 DX, 33MHz
2X CD-ROM drive
8 megabytes RAM
10 megabytes hard disk



Forget Vito Corleone; these elves are all the muscle you'll need.

he pops up to expound on certain characters or plot points. The rendering on this guy is really high-quality. To be honest, I wasn't expecting a comedy adventure to contain graphics that look this good.

As you might expect, the game's most outstanding quality is its humor. I'm not talking about stupid knock-knock jokes or lame impressions; *KOM* comes through with some material that will *really* make you laugh. A good example of this



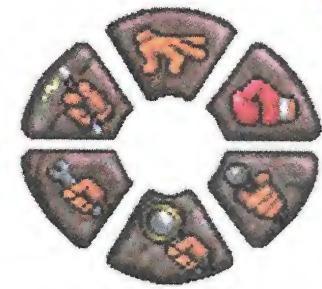
laugh—from goofy names, to your player berating you for making a bad decision. Repeated run-ins with the same characters, e.g., Ringwraiths, orcs, etc., yield similar jokes, but each of the 105 locations in the game has at least a few site-based jokes. In short, *KOM* will keep you laughing for quite some time.

I'm sure some will see this game—no matter how good it is—as unoriginal. This type of game has been attempted by many others, most notably by one of Monty

Python's own in *Discworld*. But though this is a valid point, no other comedy RPG has succeeded in so

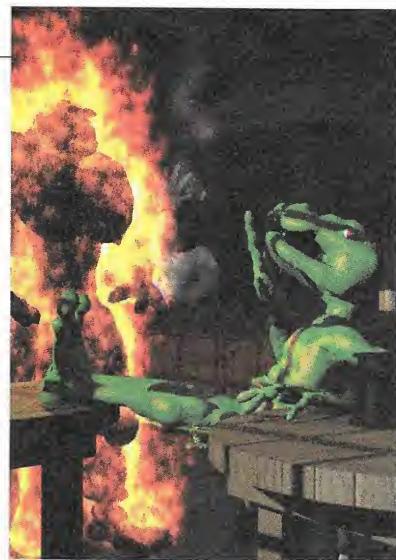
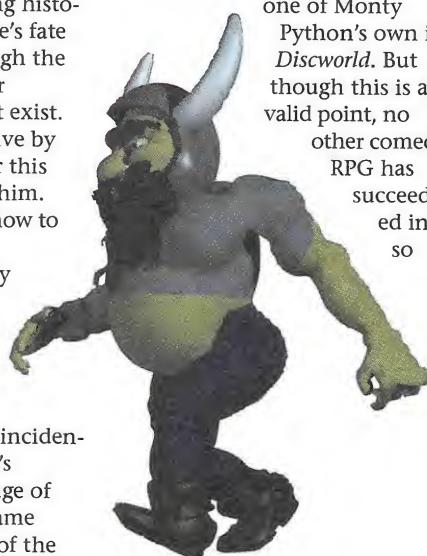
many vital areas. You'll find that, while you're laughing, you're also feeling compelled to complete the quest. It's easy to lose sight of the fact that, when all is said and done, a comedy RPG is still an RPG: there needs to be a reason to finish the game. *KOM* manages to link humor with the actions needed to complete the quest; the result is a funny game that will give its players many hours of entertainment.

SCI won't win any awards for originality with *KOM*, but it will receive a lot of recognition for doing justice to a genre of RPG that, until now, hasn't been fully tapped. In the past, funny games weren't very playable and playable games weren't very funny. *KOM* remedies this problem with a solid role-playing engine, eye-popping graphics, an intuitive interface and some very funny material. Plus, how could you not like a game that includes the Spell O' Airstrike and the Comedy Mallet? If you like to laugh, which most normal people do, you should definitely give this one a try.



This is it: one of the most user-friendly interfaces to grace an adventure/RPG.

humor comes during your first encounter with a Ringwraith. The narrator pops in and gives you a long history of how this creature's fate has it searching through the Kingdom O' Magic for magic rings that don't exist. He finishes his narrative by saying, "...feel pity for this poor creature. Or kill him. Who am I to tell you how to play this game?" The stereotype of the kindly elf is shattered when the pointy-eared little devils are portrayed as an organization of thugs not unlike the Mafia (incidentally, one of the game's endings takes advantage of these thugs). This is tame compared with some of the



Nothing quite like a nice stogy after a day o' questing.

GAME-PLAYING HINTS

- The Boy-in-a-Cage might be useful against some angry gingerbread men.
- Sleeping at an inn for a night will restore some of your health.
- After a fight, check out your opponent's gravestone for loot.
- You need a lot of stuff to finish your quest; if a passerby has something you want, attempt to get it through conversation, barter or combat.
- The Spell O' Kolgate Shield is very useful against Ringwraiths.

OVERALL

8

\$ Value	8
Originality	6
Playability	8
Graphics	8
Music	7
Sound FX	8

KINGDOM O' MAGIC

GENRE: adventure/role-playing.

CONTENTS: slapstick, British wit, understatement, '70s memorabilia, 11 mobsters.

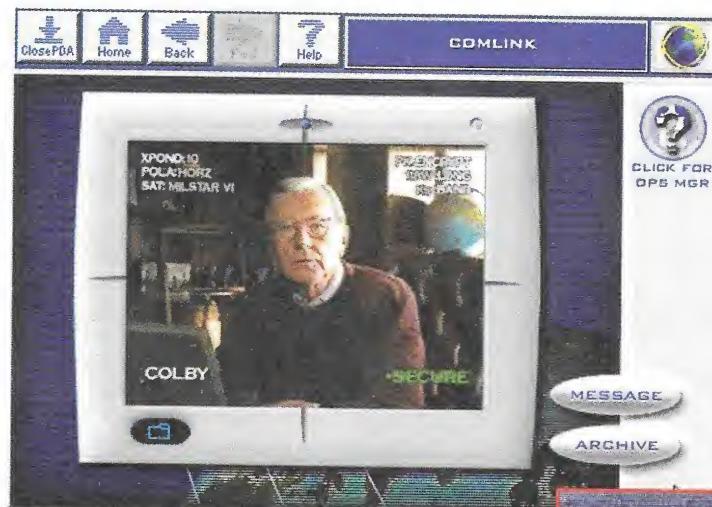
HITS: funny material backed up by good graphics and a solid RPG engine.

MISSES: repeated jokes, choppy character animation.

LAST WORD: looks great and plays well with a variety of gags and jokes to extend its playability.

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Spycraft: The Great Game



This is about as close as most of us will ever get to this facility.

TECH BOX



Price: \$49.95

Media: compact disc

Developer: Activision

Publisher: Activision, 11601 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 300, Los Angeles, CA 90025; 310.473.9200.

Website:
<http://www.activision.com>

Min. system req:
IBM PC 486, 66MHz
Windows 95/MS-DOS
VESA local bus or PCI video
SVGA graphics
2X CD-ROM drive
8 megabytes RAM
12 megabytes hard disk

Before dropping this puppy into my CD tray, I was all a flutter with expectation. James Adams, a noted writer of espionage thrillers, William Colby, former director of the CIA and Oleg Kalugin, a former major general in the KGB, all had a hand in creating this game; I could only wonder whether the authenticity of their experiences would come through. Would *Spycraft* right the wrongs of its many, lame predecessors? Would the interface be intuitive and not require a diploma from the CIA's academy? And, most important, would I be able to use a telephone-shoe, just like Maxwell Smart?

Unfortunately, there were no special shoes, but Activision did manage to make an outstanding spy simulation. Very nice graphics are complemented by a compelling plot, decent acting and a variety of gadgets with which to finish your job.

Here's the scenario: the recent

assassination of a Russian presidential candidate—a guy by the last name of Chubansky—has caused a number of safety concerns about our President's impending trip to the former Soviet Union. It's your job to investigate Chubansky's assassination and make sure that our President's safety won't be compromised. Sounds as if this plot would result in a pretty short and disappointing game, right? Wrong. From the moment you begin playing as special agent Thorn, you are presented with the first of many twists in your pursuit of Chubansky's assassin.

Your first stop is at "The Farm"—the CIA's training facility. After completing a series of elementary tests with some of your spy tools, such as Image Analysis, you are congrat-

ulated by a senior officer—Bruce Jeffries—who is killed via a bullet to the ole noggin while he congratulates you. For all you gore-mongers out there, the high quality of the graphics in this game makes Jeffries' murder pretty detailed. From the site of Jeffries' mysteriously underemphasized murder, you're whisked back to Langley, the CIA headquarters, to receive further information about the case in Russia.

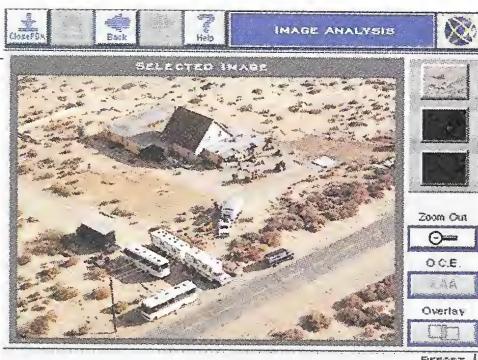
You soon discover that Jeffries' murder is only the first in a series of compelling plot twists that make this game so addictive.

With the murder of Jeffries still fresh in your mind, you begin your investigation into Chubansky's assassination. At this point, you realize just how far the game's creators have gone to produce the elusive feel of authenticity. The Kennedy Assassination Tool (KAT), a "real life" tool used to investigate the murder of JFK, is at your disposal for investigating the site of the Russian candidate's murder. In addition, you have gadgets such as Sound Analysis, The Security Model, Mix and Match, Intelink and BADMAN at your disposal. Best of all, most of





Tutorials such as these work nicely into the game's plot and give you the chance to experiment with your tools.



these tools can be accessed and used through your personal digital assistant (PDA). Navigating the PDA and its many functions is virtually effortless and allows you more time to concentrate on the many puzzles that stand between you and Chubansky's killer.

Would *Spycraft* right the wrongs of its many lame predecessors? Would the interface be intuitive and not require a diploma from the CIA's academy? And, most important, would I be able to use a telephone-shoe, just like Maxwell Smart?

CREDO

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WE CONDUCT OURSELVES ACCORDING TO THE HIGHEST STANDARDS OF INTEGRITY, MORALITY AND HONOR, AND TO THE SPIRIT AND LETTER OF OUR LAW AND CONSTITUTION.

WE MEASURE OUR SUCCESS BY OUR PROTECTION OF AMERICAN VALUES, SECURITY AND NATIONAL INTEREST.

WE BELIEVE OUR PEOPLE ARE THE AGENCY'S MOST IMPORTANT RESOURCE...

You'll have to take this credo to heart if you want to beat this game.

A pretty cool aspect of this game, exclusive to Windows 95 users, is the ability to access a Spycraft Web page from within the game; you'll need *Netscape 2.0* or *MS Explorer* to utilize this option. I recommend giving it a try. Nothing is more likely to make you truly immersed in a game than being stuck somewhere, going directly to the Web page and chatting with other "spies" stuck in similar predicaments. And through

to cram you into the shoes of a CIA operative.

There are only a handful of real downers. First and most notably, the first-person point of view is not fully taken advantage of. Thorn's movements are performed by pointing and clicking. I know that, in this genre, this is an accepted method of character navigation, but *Spycraft* could have benefited from a more fluid, *Doom*-esque navigation. I realize this would have com-

promised the overall graphics quality, but I believe it would have yielded better gameplay. The musical score is very nice and builds up to crescendos in extremely tense scenes, but one flaw is the glaring absence of any significant music during the many hours of downtime, i.e., in your office, in a room with no one in it, etc. Much of your puzzle-solving is done during this downtime, and a more pronounced score could have really improved the experience. Last, I have to express my disappointment at the lack of telephone-shoes. I've been fixated on them since I was a kid and feel jilted that they weren't included (I have what you might call "shoe issues").

GAME-PLAYING HINTS

- Trust no one. You'll soon discover that people you rely on might easily betray you.
- If you get confused about what you're supposed to do, just check your Ops Manager on your PDA.
- Don't be afraid to use a little torture to get the answers you want from suspects. (Screw the Geneva Convention!)
- Be sure to check out the piece of paper stuck to Holt's computer monitor.

I know it sounds clichéd, but *Spycraft: The Great Game* really is a great game. Activision's undoubtedly pricey investment in Adams, Colby and Kalugin has really paid off. The seemingly elementary—but actually elusive—authenticity, which is lacking in most other games of this genre, is apparent from the first scene. The tools you use, the places you go and even the things you say, are believable. Though the first-person perspective could have been better utilized, and the score could have been tweaked a little more, this game has the real goods. Any espionage enthusiast would be a fool to pass this one up.

SPYCRAFT: THE GREAT GAME

OVERALL **9**

\$ Value	8
Originality	6
Playability	9
Graphics	9
Music	7
Sound FX	8

LAST WORD: an espionage enthusiast's dream come true: this game puts you squarely in the shoes of a real CIA agent and keeps you guessing.

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Zork Nemesis



Grab the handle on the left, move it up, and see what happens.



AN INVITATION:
We invite all the citizens of the Empire to read this book to ponder in their hearts the message it contains and then to ask the Implementors, in the name of Yornik himself, if it is not undeniably, irrefutably and without doubtably true. Those who pursue this course, the right and proper course of Science and Progress, rather than clinging to the older tenets of the fearful and foolish Brognomadism, and that it is not simply the good nature of this one fellow that keeps it and us from falling into the Great Void.

TECH BOX



Price: \$54.95

Media: compact disc

Developer: Activision

Publisher: Activision, 11601 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 300, Los Angeles, CA 90025; 310.473.9200

Website:
<http://www.activision.com>

Min. system req:
IBM PC 486 DX2, 66MHz
MS-DOS, Windows 95
2X speed CD-ROM drive
8 megabytes RAM
50 megabytes hard disk
SVGA VESA local bus or
PCI video

Perhaps no other title in the history of computer games has amassed as large and as loyal a following as *Zork*. Its modest beginning as a text adventure in the early days of computer gaming couldn't have prepared fans for the game's newest incarnation. Does this graphic adventure meet the demands created by its predecessors?

The challenge of pleasing the game's diehard fans while taking advantage of the newer PCs' processing power is a formidable one. If it's too fancy-looking, hardcore fans of the series will say that Activision sold out a good game in exchange for pretty pictures. If it doesn't look good enough, newer players won't even give it a

...four of the Empire's greatest alchemists have been imprisoned in private hells by the Nemesis.

To prevent the Nemesis' eventual takeover of the entire Empire, you need to learn the secrets of alchemy and use those secrets to free the imprisoned alchemists.

second glance. In short, Activision had a tough job in the creation of this game. Did they succeed? Well, to be as ambiguous as possible, yes and no.

In a nutshell, here is the story behind the latest addition to the *Zork* franchise. You enter the fabled realm of the Great Underground Empire—the Forbidden Lands, to be precise. Soon after your arrival, you discover the reason for your presence: four of the Empire's greatest alchemists have been imprisoned in private hells by the Nemesis. To prevent the Nemesis' eventual takeover of the entire Empire, you need to learn the secrets of alchemy and use those secrets to free the imprisoned alchemists. The path to freeing them will





This chair holds the key to solving the puzzle of fire.

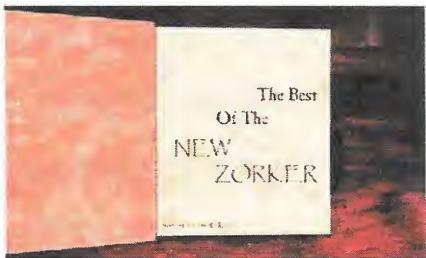
take you through five worlds, each filled with puzzles that range from easy to mind-bending.

The gameplay in *ZN* won't redefine the genre. One of many striking resemblances between this title and *Myst* is the point-and-click interface. Whenever your pointer (shaped like something akin to

from previous games of this genre. Backward thinking and the ability to form very strange analogies will undoubtedly aid you in your quest to free the imprisoned alchemists. These puzzles are fascinating, and though they aren't copies of puzzles found in other graphic adventures, they're so similar that you will feel as though

you've been confronted with them before. If, by some chance, you do get stuck solving these standard puzzles, you can now ask for help from within the game. Activision has kindly included a "help" feature that will give you clues ranging from

obscure to step-by-step instructions (for all you diehards out



the Blue Oyster Cult symbol), passes over something with which it can interact, a red light in its center glows. If you can pick up or move something, the pointer turns into a hand. The most appealing aspect of this standard interface is the ease with which you can add items to your inventory and then cycle through them. Left-clicking picks up an obtainable item, and right-clicking cycles through your warehouse of inventoried items.

You'll be using this easy-access inventory a lot as you work your way through *ZN*'s five worlds. The plethora of puzzles, if I may use that expression, requires that you use every trick you've learned

15 MAGE WAGE WAGE!
It is more difficult to
seize the four alchemical
metals than I first
thought. I have learned
through a painful process
to trial and error that
it is not safe to keep
the elements in their
excited form. The four
are not yet ready for my
lens; gaining access to
their secret laboratories
has been a labored
process. I will see about

2. not fallen down
Malcus' wobbly belly
and see if he carries out
something helpful.

there, there's the option to lock yourself out from this assistance during installation). In all, *ZN* offers a solid execution of an established game-play engine.

The graphics and sound in *ZN* are extremely well done. This is due, in large part, to the fact that Activision brought on Mauro Borrelli (*Batman Forever*, *Dracula*, etc.) as art director.

GAME-PLAYING HINTS

■ Don't lock yourself out of the help feature. If you do, you'll have no one but yourself to blame when you throw your monitor out the window.

■ Look to your right when you walk into the library. Those big boxes look like they're hiding something, don't they?

■ The mirror you pick up soon after starting the game will be used in the room with all the candles. Try hanging it on the ceiling, and check out the reflection of the candle's flames. Does one of the flames look funny?

The dark, ominous atmosphere that enthralled moviegoers in the aforementioned movies is alive and, dare I say, improved in *ZN*. Each of the game's five worlds is rendered in 3-D and wrought from crumbling buildings, brooding statues and an overwhelming sense of darkness. Imagine a mix of *Myst*-type pictures and Edgar Allan Poe, and you'll have a pretty good idea of the mood this game pursues.

Complementing this visual smorgasbord is a very effective musical score. Everything you do in the game is accompanied by unique music that really succeeds in contributing to the foreboding atmosphere. As you explore the different areas of

the five worlds, you will find that sitting on the edge of your seat has as much to do with the story as it does with the creepy images and soft music playing in the background.

Did Activision succeed in pleasing both hardcore *Zork* fans and new players? It appears they did the best they could. Hardcore fans will undoubtedly be interested in the plot, but might find the difficulty a little below par for the *Zork* series. Newcomers will find the 3-D-rendered backgrounds breathtaking, but they may be a little disheartened to move through this environment with a point-and-click-interface. New and old players alike will definitely notice the kinship of *ZN* and games such as *Myst*; some may like tradition, but others will be disappointed by the lack of innovation.

ZORK NEMESIS

GENRE: adventure/puzzle.

CONTENTS: alchemists, black magic, puzzles, libraries, tyrants and line dancing (just kidding).

HITS: beautifully rendered backgrounds, unique help feature, ability to look up, down, left and right from predetermined spots, interesting puzzles.

MISSES: "been there, done that" syndrome: this type of game has been done to death.

LAST WORD: *Myst* and *Zork* freaks will love this title, while gamers looking for something new will be disappointed.

OVERALL

7

\$ Value	7
Originality	5
Playability	8
Graphics	9
Music	8
Sound FX	7

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College Slam

College Slam is the latest rendition of the classic arcade basketball game, *NBA Jam*. Thanks to its fast action, outrageous dunks and loads of "secret" hidden characters that could be called up to play with or against the NBA-licensed All-Stars, that was a huge sensation. The sequel—last year's *NBA Jam Tournament Edition*—had more players, moves and secrets, and now, with *College Slam*, Acclaim hopes to cash in on the ever growing popularity of collegiate basketball.

For the uninitiated, the only resemblances that *College Slam* has to real college basketball are the ball, backboard, rim, and 40-plus school names and logos provided by



the basket and take your best shot. If the defense is all over you, you can dish the ball off to your teammate; otherwise, hit the "boost" key for extra speed, and slam the ball home with a thunderous dunk. To spice up the action, turn on the Power-Up mode to make icons appear randomly on the court. Running over an

tail of flame makes the ball look like a comet scorching across the court, and it incinerates the net as it goes through the hoop; if you go up for a dunk while on fire, you become a human torch.

Because this is college ball, a few things in the *NBA Jam* versions obviously had to change. Instead of four quar-



ters, the game is now two, six-minute halves. The collegiate license provides authentic team names, but no real players as the NBA license did. But *College Slam* does include

the "Officially Licensed Collegiate Product" seal. Like its arcade predecessors, the basketball played here is a two-on-two slam-dunkathon with no fouls and no rules, except goal tending and the shot clock. You can shove your opponents to the ground, dribble into the backcourt, or throw the ball out of bounds without any stoppage of play.

The gameplay is pretty straightforward: inbound the ball, run downcourt toward

You can shove your opponents to the ground, dribble into the backcourt, or throw the ball out of bounds....

icon gives your player that particular power-up, which can be anything from making a teammate invisible to the other team to having lightning bolts strike your goal and prevent your opponents from scoring.

As in the *NBA Jam* games before it, if you score three baskets in a row, you're "on fire" and have unlimited turbo boost and the ability to sink the ball from just about anywhere on the court. When you shoot, a



He shoots from Daytona Beach!

TECH BOX



List price: \$49.95

Media: compact disc

Developer: Iguana

Publisher: Acclaim Entertainment, One Acclaim Plaza, Glen Cove, NY 11542-2777; 516.759.7800

Website: <http://www.acclaimnation.com>

Min. system req:
IBM PC 486 DX2, 66MHz
30 megabytes hard disk
8 megabytes RAM
2X CD-ROM drive
1 megabyte VESA SVGA graphics card



Lots of options, but we've seen most of them before.

a team editor that lets you change the roster of your favorite teams and modify the position name each player has, e.g., "Small Forward," by adding their actual name. You can also adjust a player's skill

match up any two teams against each other for a single game; Tournament, which can either be a 16-team elimination or go straight to the Semifinals; and Season mode, in which you must guide your school through a 20-game season. At the start of each game, you select the two players from your team's five-man roster who will hit the hardwood, and you can make substitutions either at half-time or by using the single time out allowed during each half.

For an arcade-style computer game, *College Slam* plays very well on a fast PC; the control on my Pentium 100 was very good, and the speed of the game was equal to my console



The truly wild dunks will have you flying off the screen.

attributes to affect speed, dunking ability, three-point shooting ability, clutch play and so on. Each player has

only a certain number of rating "points," so raising one category means you'll have to lower another. *College Slam* includes three modes of play—Head to Head, which lets you

The big problem with *College Slam* is that it really doesn't offer anything different from *NBA Jam TE*, which also included power-ups and most of the other features of *College Slam*. The audio color commentary, beloved in the first *NBA Jam* (especially the arcade and Genesis versions), is extremely stale here, with the same few phrases being repeated again and again. Though you can skip the horribly digitized FMV intro that would make you think the Sega CD was laser-disc quality, you're forced to sit through Acclaim and Iguana's own self-promotion clips.

If *NBA Jam* or the *NBA Jam TE* had never existed, *College Slam* would be worth checking into if you were looking for a fast, enjoyable arcade game of hoops. But its complete lack of originality and innovation—except for the most rudimentary changes forced on it by the "College" title—makes *College Slam* only of interest to those who have never played *NBA Jam*.

COLLEGE SLAM

GENRE: sports.

CONTENTS: 44 college teams, cheerleaders and fight songs, super dunks, ally-oops, tornadoes and lightning.

HITS: straightforward play; just dive into the action.

MISSES: if you've played *NBA Jam*, you won't find anything new here.

LAST WORD: *College Slam* is an enjoyable hoops game, but it offers nothing new when compared with its predecessors.



GAME-PLAYING HINTS

■ Don't always try for the monster jam. If an opposing player is right on your tail, he'll probably block your dunk. Instead, while you're in flight, take advantage of the nearly constant double teaming, and pass the ball off to your teammate for an easy score.

■ Remember that three-pointers are worth more than dunks (even if they don't look as spectacular), and they're easy to hit when you're behind.



OVERALL	6
\$ Value	4
Originality	4
Playability	7
Graphics	7
Music	8
Sound FX	6

Space Dude

When the evil King Dorf (no relation to Tim Conway) rallies his mechanical Hopper Attack Force and kidnaps the princess, only one man can stop him from laying waste to the inhabitants of an otherwise peaceful world—Dude, Space Dude.

Announcing his presence with a beleaguered, "Aaaaaahhh," *Space Dude* must take on the malevolent forces of King Dorf, save the planet, and maybe get a date with the princess. There are plenty of types of arcade-style game—from those in which you lob shots at a dangerous monster to more

basic two-dimensional side-scrolling games—but most are a bit simplistic and don't carry much replay value. What really sets *Space Dude* apart from most arcade games is that it's—well—very offbeat. You'll either get into it or you won't.



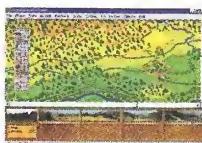
Price: \$39.95
Genre: action
Publisher: Formgen
Telephone: 602.443.4109
Website: <http://www.formgen.com>
System: IBM PC

OVERALL
8
RATING

Battleground: Ardennes—Battle of the Bulge

Ever wanted to take part in the Battle of the Bulge, making command decisions and seeing whether you could guide the Germans to victory? Or would you prefer to follow history and play as the U.S.? Either way,

Battleground: Ardennes gives you the chance to see whether you can guide either force to victory. The wargame is divided into traditional hexes, and like most wargames, its graphics and sound effects are suitable but nothing great. Veteran wargamers will have no trouble sliding into *Ardennes*' interface, but newcomers will probably want to test their wargaming skills in something easier. Giving *Ardennes* the edge over most other wargames is that it allows you to play modem-to-modem with a friend, and a full-featured scenario editor ensures lasting replay value.



SCENARIO EDITOR



Price: \$59.95
Genre: wargame
Publisher: TalonSoft
Telephone: 410.821.7282
Website: <http://www.talonsoft.com>
System: IBM PC CD

OVERALL
7
RATING

Johnny Bazookatone

It was bad enough when El Diablo, lord of the underworld, stole all but one of the world's top musicians. But when Diablo couldn't get Johnny Bazookatone, rocker supreme, he did the next worse thing: he stole Johnny's true love, Anita—Johnny's guitar. And now there's hell to pay. Thus begins this side-scrolling adventure in which Johnny, sporting a bullet-spewing guitar, blasts demons, solves puzzles and keeps a firm check on his hair. From its zombie-filled graveyard all the way to Diablo's penthouse, *Johnny Bazookatone*'s graphics and SGI animations are clearly better than those of any other IBM platformer to date. With a title track from Richie Sambora and plenty of rocking CD sounds, the music is also great. Fortunately, the playability is just as good, making Johnny not only king of music, but a platformer for the IBM PC.



Price: \$49.95
Genre: action
Publisher: U.S. Gold
Telephone: 415.693.0497
E-mail: usgold@aol.com
System: IBM PC CD

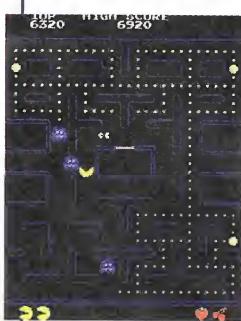
OVERALL
9
RATING

Microsoft's Return of Arcade

Following in the footsteps of Microsoft's earlier successful classic Arcade package, Microsoft's *Return of Arcade* brings four "new" classics back to life: *Pac-Man*, *Dig Dug*, *Galaxian* and *Pole Position*. You won't have to pump money into the games (apart from the initial 140 quarters purchase price), but you will be able to set the rate of fire,



number of lives, keyboard controls and other variables—as long as you want to mess with their original default settings. The individual games all play like the originals and revive the addictive drive that was common when games were simple and playability was everything. *Pole Position* suffers the most, primarily because of its poor controls. Overall,



this collection of old arcade games is much better than the usual repackaging of so-called classics, primarily because these particular games can stand the test of time.



Price: \$34.95
Genre: action
Publisher: Microsoft
Telephone: 800.426.9400
Website: <http://www.microsoft.com/windows/games>
System: IBM PC CD

OVERALL
8
RATING

Starball

At last, a computer pinball game that remembers it's on a computer and can do more than just model the physics of pinball. *Starball* attempts to add a little more pizzazz to the over-abundant computer pinball gaming world by having moving objects, explosions and even mini-games that can be reached via teleportation after completing certain tasks—all while playing pinball. For example, by taking out wave after wave of small fighters, you can slowly assemble a rocket ship. Having assembled it, you can enter the ship and play mini-games with your pinball, from pinball variations on *Breakout* even to *Space Invaders*. Though it's fun to have "objectives," *Starball* is ultimately hindered by having only one real pinball table; this severely limits the replay value.



Price: \$49.95

Genre: action

Publisher: GameTek

Telephone: 800.439.3995

Website: <http://www.gametek.com>

System: IBM PC CD

OVERALL
7
RATING

Chaos

In *Chaos*, you're thrown into a world loosely (and I mean loosely) based on chaos theory. You awake to find yourself in a very different existence—one in which logic may not be the answer to everything. Among the inhabitants of this world are your odd Uncle Prospero, some questionable medical personnel and a crazed thug who seems to think you owe him money. The interface is the standard hot-spot interface, which allows easy movement and actions, and the graphics are, for the most part, fairly well-done. Though the potential is interesting, most of *Chaos* just doesn't feel very alive—much less chaotic—and it fails to create an intriguing atmosphere. The less than informative manual and sketchy back of the box don't give any clue about what's going down in *Chaos*, and chaos is what you'll experience as you play the game.



Price: \$49.95

Genre: puzzle

Publisher: GrayMatter/HarperCollins Interactive

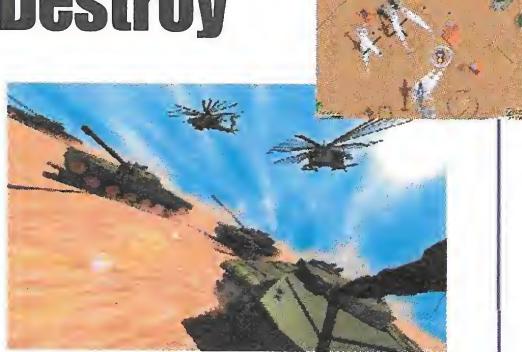
Telephone: 800.424.6234

Website: <http://www.harpercollins.com>

System: IBM PC CD

OVERALL
6
RATING

Seek and Destroy



Fans of Electronic Arts' *Desert*, *Jungle* and *Urban Strike* series will want to check out Safari's latest shooter, *Seek and Destroy*. Unlike the *Strike* series' three-quarters overhead view, *Seek and Destroy* has a direct overhead view in which the landscape scales as you turn your vehicle.

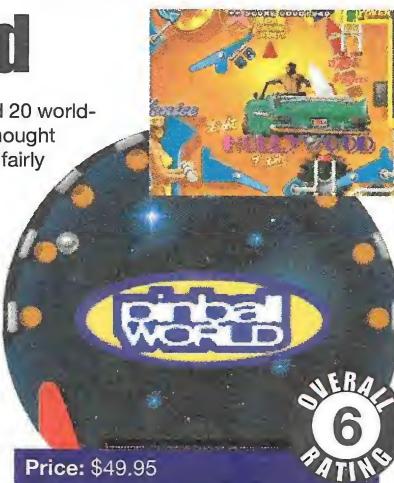
Through the game's 20 missions, you'll be either death-from-above in your gunship or a carnage-dealing tank treading your way through constant action. Every mission has certain objectives, from rescuing people to destroying enemy facilities. You'll need to watch your fuel and ammo, too, or you may find yourself grounded permanently. With brisk explosions and smoking missiles, the graphics are good and complement the action.

Fortunately, *Seek and Destroy*'s controls are easy to master, so you can quickly concentrate on the action at hand. Modem-play would have been nice though.



Pinball World

On reading that *Pinball World* contained 20 world-country-theme pinball tables, my first thought was that the tables would be small and fairly non-involving. Unfortunately, my first thought was correct, and although *Pinball World* does indeed boast 20 complete tables, they are small and



OVERALL
6
RATING

Price: \$49.95

Genre: action

Publisher: 21st Century Entertainment

Website: <http://www.21stcent.com>

Telephone: 716.872.1200

System: IBM PC

their "mechanic" effects are limited, leaving a fair amount of open space. On the positive side, the tables are all linked, so you can complete a table then move on to the next. The sound effects are fairly good, and the music is spooled directly off the CD (this lifts the sound over the rest of the game). In the end, though, it's a very small world.



Price: \$39.95

Genre: action

Publisher: Safari/Epic Megagames

Telephone: 800.238.1393

Website: <http://www.epicgames.com>

System: IBM PC CD

OVERALL
7
RATING



INTERVIEW

Jeff Vavasour:

Kingpin of the Game

Jo, I'm cruising Usenet newsgroups one day, when I see a message from Jeff Vavasour, the programmer of the amazing emulators in Activision's *Commodore 64 15 Pack* and Digital Eclipse's *Williams Arcade Classics*.

After several e-mails and untold groveling, Jeff agrees to an interview. Here's his insight into creating emulators.

COMPUTER PLAYER: What got you started creating console and system emulators for computers, and what were some of your earlier creations?

JEFF VAVASOUR: Now that home computers have been around for nearly 20 years in mass numbers, like everything else, they've developed a history and nostalgia of their own. If the TRS-80 Model I—a computer that first came out in 1977—were a car, it would qualify as an antique and would be polished up and paraded around in car shows. Antique-car buffs pride themselves on knowing their vehicle inside out—every hose, every gear. These days, cars have EFI control boxes, and tinkering is next to impossible. It's become a lost art.

The same thing with computers: things like the Windows operating system have made computers easier to use, but the hands-on hobbyists have been left without the experience of being able to mold every aspect of the way a program deals with the hardware.

I was one of those hobbyists, and missing the "good ole days," I decided to write an emulator of the TRS-80 Model I to recapture some of that. It succeeded twofold, because to write an emulator, your code has to be very efficient, so you have to understand every quirk and nuance of the platform you're coding on to get that efficiency. That means breaking the "convenient" operating system shell to hit the hardware.

Some fellow hobbyists encouraged me to release the Model I emulator as shareware, and it did well. I followed it up with an emulator for the Timex/Sinclair 1000 and another for the TRS-80 Color Computer series. They were all well-received; it amazed me how much nostalgia had built up out there. Digital Eclipse became aware of my work, and I was brought in to apply my experience to *Williams Arcade Classics* [WAC] for MS-DOS. They had done the Mac versions of *Joust*, *Robotron* and *Defender* internally. That project went so well that I was able to add three additional games not originally intended to be part of the package: *Defender II*, *Sinistar* and *Bubbles*.

Digital Eclipse apparently had developed a reputation for emulation, and Activision approached us to do the *Commodore 64 15 Pack*. A fellow enthusiast approached Activision on my behalf a year earlier to pitch my Atari 2600 emulator, but it was for DOS, not Windows; Activision went with Mike Livesay on it, who'd also been bidding on the project.



How many quarters did you spend on playing *Joust*?



Emulators

by Zach Meston

CP: For which operating system do you prefer to program—MS-DOS or Windows 95? What are the advantages of programming for each?

JV: I sidestepped Windows completely until Windows 95. It's definitely an improvement over the old Windows, particularly with Microsoft's Game Subsystem—DirectX. However, you have to be careful on those claims that DirectX-based games give better performance than their MS-DOS counterparts. This is not some programming marvel, but rather, DirectX gives programmers a uniform way of taking advantage of the advanced features, which may be present in higher-end video boards. MS-DOS programs have to support the lowest common denominator, which hurts the MS-DOS game's performance. On

a not-so-advanced video board, the Windows program doesn't have this advantage, and the MS-DOS program wins the performance race.

Williams Arcade Classics, since it imitates very old hardware, doesn't suffer by being an MS-DOS program. It didn't need advanced board features because the original coin-op games from the early '80s didn't have advanced features, either.

I think this revival has to do with a look and feel that you can't find today. I'm hoping there'll be interest in reviving more of these classic games.

I certainly would love to have a part in bringing them back.

CP: How does Michael Livesay, the programmer who did the Atari 2600 Action Pack emulator, fit in?

JV: He came in to consult on a sound problem we were having near the end of development on the *Atari 2600 Action Pack*. His emulator is a good product. I'm quite impressed with his feat of taking on a Windows program as his first PC project. That's quite a hassle to dive into.

Because of Windows performance issues, he was forced to drop frames in the graphics, which

makes the game action less smooth. I had to do the same thing in the *Commodore 64 15 Pack*. If I'd done the *Action Pack*, I would've leaned toward MS-DOS—if it were my call to do so—to get the full frame rate. My prototype MS-DOS-based *Atari 2600* emulator, which I never finished, could get 180 frames per second on my 486/33 when playing *Sky Jinks*. That means the game had to be slowed down to one third of its speed to play properly. Similarly, *WAC* does not drop any frames, so you get much smoother animation.

CP: How much creative control did you have on your projects?

JV: I was given a fair amount more control over *WAC* than the *15 Pack*. In fact, *Defender II*, *Sinistar* and *Bubbles* were just some things I was tinkering with during a few idle weeks I had around testing time. When I showed my producer what I had, he and everyone else liked it, and the package was revamped. It's actually quite neat: *WAC* is the first retail release of *Sinistar* outside the coin-op version. There was a prototype Atari 2600 version, which I've heard is in the hands of a few collectors.

CP: What other game projects are you working on?

JV: I just finished working on a Windows 95 version of *Williams Arcade Classics*. We did our best not to compromise the principles established in *WAC* for MS-DOS, so this one is full-screen, courtesy of DirectX, and the extra memory affords improved clarity on the game sound samples. As an added bonus, all the sounds for all the games are on the CD as standard Windows sound files, so tinkerers can power up their Windows 95 to *Sinistar*'s, "Beware, I live" if they like. The CD also has the full MS-DOS version, too.

A few extras have been added to the Win95 version, some based on suggestions from fans of these classic games. One notable addition is that we now have the option to select the new *Joust* as used in *WAC* for MS-DOS, or the old *Joust* with

the infamous "pterodactyl bug." [In case you're not familiar, the supposedly hard-to-defeat pterodactyl would continuously impale itself on your lance if you stood in the right spot, for virtually unlimited points.]

Currently, I'm working with a few other programmers to produce SNES/Genesis ports of five of the games in *WAC* [*Bubbles* gets dropped]. These won't be emulations, as the SNES/Genesis aren't powerful enough for real-time emulation. Nonetheless, the programmers involved are intimately familiar with the code of the original games; two of the other programmers worked on the PlayStation version of *WAC*, and we're going to make sure we're authentic.

CP: How do you feel about the growing popularity of retro-gaming?

JV: I think this revival has to do with a look and feel that you can't find today. I'm hoping there'll be interest in reviving more of these classic games. I certainly would love to have a part in bringing them back. CP

Three of Jeff's shareware emulators can be found on the World Wide Web at [ftp://oak.oakland.edu/SimTel/msdos/emulator](http://oak.oakland.edu/SimTel/msdos/emulator); the filenames are *coco2-14.zip*, *model1-d.zip* and *ts1000-c.zip*.

Single and Multiplayer Strategy Guide

Darkness is swept away by your floodlights. In front of you is the blue door, for which you have the blue key. Adrenaline pumps through you as the door opens to your flare.

Punching the afterburner, you blaze inside, past a horde of enemy robots, and slam head-first into the other end of the room. You can't help but note the amazing detail and colors of the wall as your ship is torn apart by the metallic monsters.

by Kevin J. McCann

Interplay for IBM PC CD

DESCENT III

The underground war has grown a lot hotter in *DESCENT II*. Smarter, bigger and more heavily armed robots inhabit huge, intricately designed levels. And if you thought the first *DESCENT* was disorienting, it's got nothing on its sequel. You'll be racing down hallways wondering why the lights are on the floor before you realize you're upside-down.

Fortunately you have me, Stryker, a veteran Pyro pilot who has spent more than enough time tearing mines apart, with either robot or human opposition (and I have the headaches to prove it!). This will serve as a general tactical guide that covers both going solo through the levels and playing *DESCENT II* the way it was meant to be played—against other people.



LEARNING TO DIVE

Before you dive headlong into the twisty, treacherous levels of *Descent II*—single or multiplayer—you'll need to get a grip on flying your Pyro. Though reflexes play a large part in reacting to robots and other players, setting up intuitive controls is just as vital.

On initially installing *Descent II* and running it, you're given your choice of controls, ranging from keyboard to joystick. You'll probably find the best configuration is a combination of both. As to what joystick will work best for

you, *Descent II* supports most of the sophisticated sticks, from the CH Flightstick Pro through the Thrustmaster series. Basically you want a joystick that, at the very minimum, has a trigger (duh), three buttons at the top and a hat.

At *Descent II*'s main menu, enter options and choose configure joystick. Aside from the trigger for firing guns, the other buttons are most commonly assigned to your secondary weapon, dropping mines and rear view. Assign these to where they feel the most comfortable. The hat's default is strafing sideways and up and down, and you probably won't want to mess with those settings.

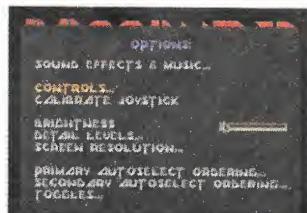
You can also customize the keyboard to perform functions, too. For example, you may find it easier to strafe side-

ways, pressing two keys side by side on the keyboard, rather than using the hat. The advantage of using the keyboard for strafing sideways is that you can use it while moving the joystick's hat up and down to create a smooth and flowing strafing system, even when moving diagonally.

Strafing is the most important ability you'll need to fight either robots or humans. Thus, it's imperative to set up the joystick and keyboard so that you can easily move side to side, up or down, or a combination thereof while facing one target.

The easiest way to get used to strafing is to go into a wide, cleared room. Eject an object into the middle of the room. Now practice circling the object moving sideways, keeping the object within your crosshairs. So if you're sidestepping left, move your joystick a little to the right to keep the object centered; or vice versa. It isn't instant, but it doesn't take too long for you to get the right feeling for it.

Now you can work on firing at the object and moving up and down while strafing sideways. If you can't strafe, you may as well hang up your flight suit, because you won't get anywhere without knowing how to do it. Remember, a moving target is harder to hit, so if you move when you're attacking something, you're also harder for your foe to hit. A pilot who stops moving during a fight is a dead pilot.





Even the toughest aces won't get past the first level if they don't know

how to pull the trigger. Death can come from all directions, so you must be ready to kill before you're killed. The following table details the guns you can find and equip your ship with, in single or multiplayer.

The table is divided into three main columns following the gun. Some guns fire more than one laser per shot (the spreadfire fires three), so the damage per laser represents the damage from being hit by just one of the lasers. The Potential damage is the damage you'll incur if you get hit by all the lasers (for example, if all four lasers of a quad nail you). Last, the energy/ammo consumption denotes how much energy or ammo is used in a single trigger tap—in other words, per shot. So if it reads .25 energy, that means every four shots uses one energy unit.

GUN	DAMAGE PER LASER	POTENTIAL DAMAGE	ENERGY/AMMO CONSUMPTION
Laser 1/Quad	.9/.13.5	18/27	.25 energy
Laser 2/Quad	10/15	20/30	.25 energy
Laser 3/Quad	10.5/16	21/32	.25 energy
Laser 4/Quad	11/18	22/36	.25 energy
Laser 5/Quad	12/24	24/48	.25 energy
Laser 6/Quad	12.5/25	25/50	.25 energy
Vulcan	.4	N/A	.13 ammo
Spreadfire	.9	27	.25 energy
Plasma	12	22	.25 energy
Fusion	16	37	.2 energy
Hélix	.8	41	.33 energy
Phoenix	7.5	15	.5 energy
Gauss	13	N/A	.25 ammo
Omega	N/A	122	.6 energy



LASER/QUAD: your basic starting weapon is the laser 1. Although it isn't powerful, it can be upgraded to level 6. For the most damaging effects, however, pick up a quad module, which gives twice the potential damage.

Solo: the quad lasers are extremely devastating, especially at level 6. It's good for strafing sideways through a crowded robot room, letting loose with quad fire.

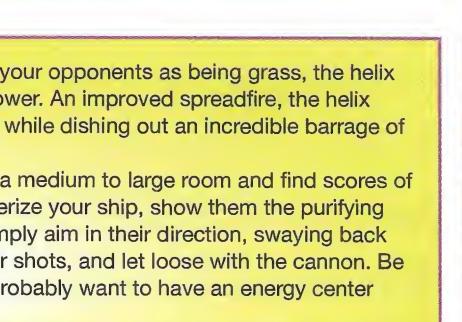
Multiplayer: two full hits from a quad will take down most opponents. If your opponent gets hit by one side, that means he or she incurs damage from two lasers, because it's impossible to get hit just by one laser (the two lasers are too close together); very useful for small room fights all the way to large room fights.



SPREADFIRE: since the original *Descent*, this has been refined and given a tighter spread. It's primarily useful for fighting in small to medium rooms.

Solo: the tighter spread of three shots gives the spreadfire an advantage against smaller robots, but you won't want to use it against medium- to heavy-duty robots.

Multiplayer: a good pilot can use a spreadfire to bring down other pilots with bigger guns in medium to large rooms. If you concentrate on dodging their shots and let loose with the spreadfire, they'll have a tough time hitting you and avoiding your shots. Still, it will be a battle of attrition as each shot does only a little damage, and all it takes to damage you significantly is one hit from your opponent's bigger gun.



HELIX: if you think of your opponents as being grass, the helix is the ultimate lawnmower. An improved spreadfire, the helix fires spirally; it rotates while dishing out an incredible barrage of shots.

Solo: when you enter a medium to large room and find scores of robots waiting to pulverize your ship, show them the purifying power of the helix. Simply aim in their direction, swaying back and forth to avoid their shots, and let loose with the cannon. Be forewarned that you probably want to have an energy center nearby, though.

Multiplayer: though the individual shots don't do too much damage, it's hard to avoid all of them, and in a battle of attrition in a large room, the helix is the best bet. Or you can simply hang out near a big fight between other players and unload your helix into the room to steal some kills safely and easily. The helix also has considerable psychological effects on your opponents; once you've opened up with it, they tend to forget about fighting back and instead look for the nearest exit. Just be sure to have an energy center nearby.

VULCAN: the vulcan machine gun fires bullets that instantly strike a target within the aiming recticle.

Solo: the vulcan is good for taking out smaller robots, but use better guns against bigger robots.

Multiplayer: if your opponent has anything bigger than a spreadfire, don't bother to use



the vulcan cannon. It's best to use on straightaways where your opponent is stuck in a tunnel, so it's impossible to dodge.

DESCENT II

Single and Multiplayer Strategy Guide



FUSION: the fusion cannon hits for major damage, but the trick is to hit robots or people. **Solo:** robots are definitely easier to nail with the fusion cannon, and weak-to-medium robots won't live to tell the tale. Powerful robots will shred you as you wait for the refire, though. **Multiplayer:** the fusion is best used to fire down long hallways in which opponents can't avoid it. For the most part, it isn't very useful.

GAUSS: the vulcan cannon's bigger brother, the gauss is sure to leave the most lead in your opponent's rear end. Capable of tearing apart an enemy within a second, the gauss is the ultimate instant death for anyone who's unwary enough to fall into its line of fire. Like the vulcan, its hit is instantaneous. Like the phoenix, though, the gauss can hurt you. It has a proximity blast, so never use it point blank on a robot or opponent. Also, don't use it in small rooms where turning and firing might clip the wall right next to you. You'll be surprised how fast it can seriously damage you.



Solo: a very capable weapon, the gauss is great at eliminating fast-moving robots. As soon as they pause, fire a burst. It's instant, so they won't be able to dodge it. Also, it's good for exploring dark areas while using the floodlight. With the floodlight using up energy, you don't need to worry about it affecting the gauss ammo base.

Multiplayer: catch someone going down a tunnel with your gauss, and they'll soon see the light at the end of it, courtesy of your trigger finger. Extremely damaging, the gauss is essentially the best straightaway gun in *Descent II*. With its instant hit, if someone pauses during a fight and you unload on them, they can't avoid the damage. Combine the gauss with a cloak and you become the ultimate, untraceable enemy.

PLASMA: arguably the most universal weapon, the plasma has a faster fire rate than all other weapons and deals out quick death through highly charged green plasma balls.



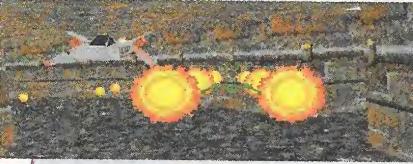
Solo: excellent against all robots, from small pests to gigantic killing machines, its high re-firing rate makes it impossible to avoid, and it quickly reduces robots to rubble.

Multiplayer: it's ideal for use in rooms with low ceilings or in hallways, where simply spreading it left to right gives your opponent no chance to duck for cover. When someone has been caught in the plasma stream, his/her ship tends to be caught and ground apart. Because of its rapid fire and damage, the plasma is also suited to medium to large rooms.

PHOENIX: imagine if the plasma could ricochet. Well, now it can, but there's a catch: it can hurt you just as much as it can hurt the enemy. Unlike the plasma, the phoenix has a limited range before it disappears. But before it reaches that range, it will be deflected off every wall, floor and ceiling, seriously damaging anyone in its path, including the shooter.

Solo: the later levels of *Descent II* sport some of the fastest, most annoying robots to date. Fortunately, the phoenix will swoop down and take them out. Simply make it ricochet off walls to create a pattern that can't be avoided, and the robots will be nothing more than particles.

Multiplayer: bouncing orange balls of death. Like the helix, the phoenix cannon is very imposing to opponents. But it's also imposing to you, because the balls can ricochet and damage you just as badly. Never afterburn when firing the phoenix, or you'll commit suicide. Its ideal use is to fire at opponents who are moving down curved hallways; you can kill them off when they can't even see



your ship. And since most of *Descent II*'s hallways curve, the phoenix is a very good weapon. But it eats energy like there's no tomorrow, so be sure to have an energy station nearby.

OMEGA: remember that cool lightning spell in *Magic Carpet*? The omega cannon is its distant cousin, and it spews forth concentrated streams of energy over a short range. Capable of tearing apart an enemy with a single burst, the omega cannon is the ultimate point-blank weapon.

Solo: the omega will shred all but the most powerful robots in a full burst. The trick is that you must pull it off at a close range. Subsequently, you'll want your strafing skills maximized so you can circle the robot, get out of the line of fire, then unload a full burst into its metallic head.

Multiplayer: nothing's finer than being cloaked with the omega cannon and catching someone snoozing, because they'll have just enough time to wake up as they get blown to bits. The closer you are to your enemy, the more damage a full stream can inflict. Keep in mind that the omega has a very short range, so don't shoot at someone at the end of a long hallway.



Missiles/Mines	Direct Hit Damage
Proximity mine	6/25
Smart mine	200+
Concussion missile	16/25
Flash missile	2/8
Homing missile	8/30
Guided missile	12/49
Smart missile	200+
Mercury missile	11/43
Mega missile	47/188
Earthshaker	200+

SMART MINES: vastly improved, these lethal gold mines are the motherlode for kills. When detonated, the smart mines let loose several golden rings that seek nearby targets. Each ring delivers significant damage, and your own smart mine won't damage you at all.

Solo: in a crowded room, drop a couple of these and watch the room get cleaned up. You can also set them off with your guns, if the robots don't go near them.

Multiplayer: ah, the true haven for smart mines. Place them right behind doors, and watch as your opponent blindly opens fire to open the door and sets off the smart mine right in his face. Or, if you're being pursued, drop one and your opponent will probably change course entirely or die.

Another good use of smart mines is to back up through a small to medium room in which

players are already fighting. As you're backing up, drop four smart mines and immediately open fire on them, setting the smart mines off and cleaning up on the unfortunates fighting in that room.



FLASH MISSILE: it isn't about physical damage; it's about visual damage, when it comes to these temporarily blinding missiles.

Solo: no real use.

Multiplayer: good for temporarily incapacitating an opponent with a direct hit, allowing you to pummel them with your guns. But for the most part, it isn't very useful, except to monitor manufacturers who must love how the monitor brightness gets blasted each time someone uses a flash.



PROXIMITY MINES: more than anything else, these small red mines serve as deterrents.



Solo: if something nasty is tailing you, drop some proximity mines to slow it down.

Multiplayer: if you're being tailed, unload some proximity mines to slow your pursuer.

CONCUSSION MISSILE:

concussions are slow dumbfires, and tend to be more useful in single player.



Solo: multiple concussions will damage a robot of any size, and it's best to use them up to save your serious ammo for more powerful enemies.

Multiplayer: concussions are really only good firing down straight tunnels where they're hard to avoid. Other than that, they rarely hit an opponent.

GUIDED MISSILE: during gameplay, hit F2 and select toggles. Choose guided missile to main display, and you're set for some serious fun. When you launch a guided missile, the entire screen becomes the missile's view, and you're the pilot.

You can control it for 20 seconds before it self-detones. Press the missile button again, and the guided missile will be released, your cockpit view will be restored, and the missile will then act as a homer to any near targets.

Solo: very good at taking out robots hiding around

corners or hitting boss robots from a safe area.

Multiplayer: excellent at finishing off players or just annoying them by letting them know they were careless enough to be hit by a guided! Guided are great to pilot into crowded fights then release and steal kills. They can also serve as recon missiles if you know the area you're in is currently safe and you're worried that your opponent is hiding around the corner.



MERCURY MISSILE:

if the mercury missile were a car, it would be seen only on a racetrack. Extremely fast dumbfires, they're hard to avoid if you're in their lineup.

Solo: good for taking out distant robots, because even robots tend to have trouble avoiding these high-speed menaces.

Multiplayer: not really good in a turnfight, but useful for nailing someone going down a straightaway, even if they're moving away from you.



HOMING MIS-SILES: basically, slightly upgraded concussion missiles with limited seeking abilities, the homers can be very useful.

Solo: homers are great at taking out less powerful robots quickly.

Multiplayer: you just ground the heck out of someone, but they're still hanging by a thread. The solution? A homer, the ultimate finish-them-off missile. Although a good pilot can avoid homers, if you let loose with four or more of them, they tend to become much harder to avoid.



MEGA MISSILE: the mother of all missiles in the original *Descent II*, the mega missile is just as dangerous in *Descent II*. With its seeking capabilities and huge blast, it ensures that none survive a close-contact explosion.

Solo: you'll preferably want to save these for boss robots, because they're hard to come by; and bosses are even harder to beat.

Multiplayer: let one loose into a crowded fight, and you're virtually guaranteed at least one kill. Don't fire point-blank, or the blast will kill you, too.



DESCENT II

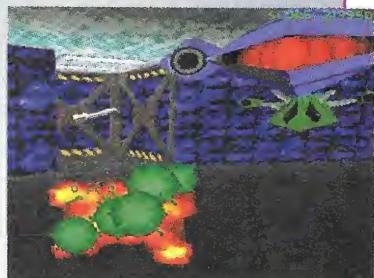
Single and Multiplayer Strategy Guide



EARTHSHAKER: the new mother of all missiles is the earthshaker, which lives up to its name. On impact, it lets loose a huge explosion that releases half-a-dozen warheads that seek out nearby targets, including one that may be sitting next to you; so don't be in the same room when you release your earthshaker.

Solo: great against bosses, it significantly weakens them. Or if you have countless, powerful robots waiting in a large room, shake their world.

Multiplayer: welcome to the "no-skill required" missile. Simply dump it into an existing fight among players and watch your kill count amplify.



SMART MISSILE: on impact, the smart missile releases green balls that seek nearby targets and seriously damage or kill outright anything they touch. There's no such thing as a grazing hit from one of these babies.

Solo: have a tough robot around the corner, out of sight? Simply fire

a smart into the wall, and the green balls will be released into the robot. Also useful for releasing into the menacing boss robots.

Multiplayer: ideal for shooting in small rooms or hallways where there are many enemies. The more enemies there are, the greater your chance of taking someone out. You can also lurk behind a door, and when someone opens it to come in, fire a smart missile into the wall near the door and give them a lethal welcome.

GENERAL SINGLE-PLAYER STRATEGIES

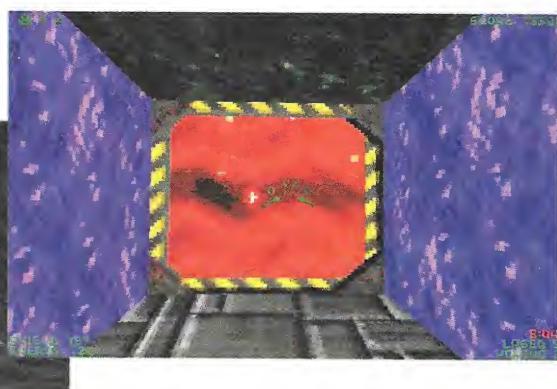
Most of the weapon use has already been covered, so this section primarily focuses on progressing through the levels. First and foremost, **press the F3 key and + or - keys** to give you an **open cockpit** view. You want to see as much as possible.

Next, **free the guide-bot** on each level—an essential and helpful friend that will significantly help you through the treacherous, confusing levels. The **guide-bot** will find the necessary **keys** and **doors**, locate **hostages**, find the **reactor** and **exit**—and more. If you're **low on energy**, order it to find the nearest **energy center**.

When traveling through dark areas, use the **flood-light**, preferably switching to the **gauss cannon** in the process. It does you no good to conserve energy if you can't see what's killing you.

The **afterburner** is very useful to **avoid enemy fire** and **missiles**. Simply **strafe sideways** and **engage the afterburner**, performing a Jet-Ski-like turn, clearing you of any incoming fire.

Use your rear view to check your six often for stalkers. Don't go charging into rooms; this is the surest way to die quickly. If possible, **without going into the room**, open a door and look around to see what you'll be up against.



You can also fire a **guided missile** into a room and let it serve as a **recon scout**.

After securing a level and clearing out most **robots**, search the walls for **secret rooms**. Walls that can be opened usually

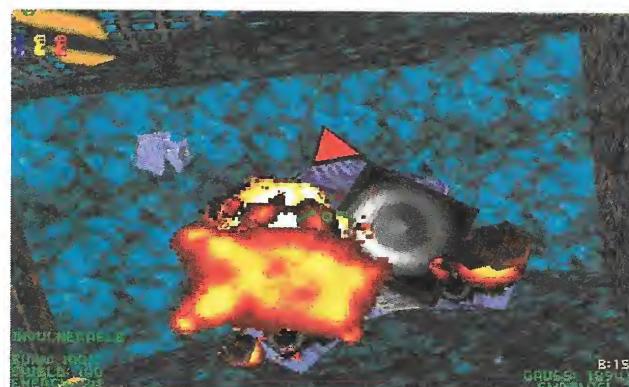
have **special markings**; **secret rooms** generally contain **weapons**, **missiles**, **ammo** and **shields** to assist you. Sometimes, **secret walls** even lead to **secret levels**, which are

basically armories in which you can seriously equip your pyro for some major robot-kicking action.

Don't hang out near robot generators. As much fun as it can be to kick back and watch an endless supply of robots come forth, sooner or later, you're going to suffer—probably sooner. You **don't want to waste valuable ammo**, especially from the gauss cannon, on harmless robots that don't have to be wasted.

Before destroying the reactor or boss, find the **exit**. Use the **guide-bot** to find the **way out**, memorize a path to it, then **take out the reactor or boss**. The last thing you want to do is destroy the reactor or boss and not be able to find the way out.

Last, but not least, **save often**. Within *Descent II*'s dangerous caverns, you'll die a lot, no matter how safe you are. If you find yourself dying too much and too often, restart at a lower skill level. The idea is to have fun, not to be endlessly frustrated.





You haven't really played *Descent II* until you take on some real opposition in the form of other people. No matter what, it's more fun blowing away your buddies than blowing away robots. As with going solo, you'll want to rid yourself of the cockpit art so you can see more by hitting the F3 key.

First and foremost, learn the levels. Whether you're playing anarchy in pandemonium, dogfight, or regular *Descent II* levels (multiplayer), learning the level's layout offers the biggest advantage over your opponents. A mediocre player can overcome a more skilled player simply by knowing a level well. Keep mental notes on the locations of the energy center, secret areas, reactor and, of course, the exit.

Picking up an afterburner also secures you an advantage in terms of speed. If someone fires a mega or earthshaker your way, afterburn out of the room and down hallways to escape. You can also use the afterburner with the plasma cannon to literally burn your way through opponents, both in terms of speed and firepower. The floodlight, on the other hand, isn't very useful, because turning it on makes your ship a beacon for your opponents.

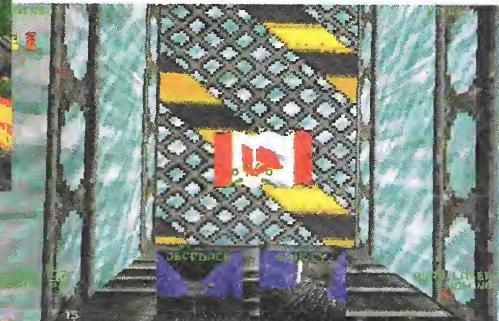
If you're of the stalk-and-prey ilk, you'll definitely want to use both markers. Markers can be set simply by hitting F4, a brief message and enter. Then tap Shift-F1 or Shift-F2 until you see the desired marker view in the lower right or left window. With your open cockpit view and two marker windows open, you can cover three areas at once.

Markers can be effectively used with just about every weapon in the book. Place a marker outside a room facing a door. Next go through the door and into the room, and arm your weapon. As soon as you see an enemy go past the marker and toward the door, you can open fire, greeting your opponent with an unhealthy array of plasma, bullets, missiles, or mines—whatever works best for you.

In the same respect, when you see an opponent's marker, be wary of how you exit that room. He or she is obviously watching you and will know in which direction you leave. Thus, be ready for immediate ambush or pursuit.

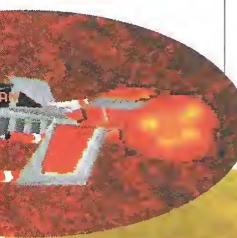


During teammate anarchy or Capture the Flag, you can use Shift-F1 or Shift-F2 to open windows to view up to two of your teammates' cockpit views. You'll actually see where they are flying and whether they're engaged in battle, or simply snoozing somewhere. Using the teammate view eliminates the need for most communication, and as long as you know the level's layout, you can open fire at will when you know your buddy is safely elsewhere.



Capture the Flag is one of the game's most unusual games. As long as you have two or more players on each team (otherwise, why play it?), use the view

windows to watch your teammate(s)' location(s). Teamwork is the key to winning, so if it's two versus two, divide the level into two areas so you don't both search the same area for the flag. If you have three on each team, assign one person to harass the other team as they try to bring back their flag.



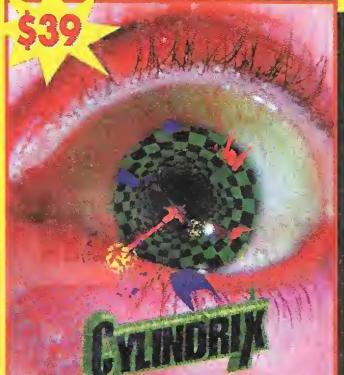
DELVING DEEPER

This guide should serve as a catalyst, allowing you to develop your own strategies in the style you like to play. Playing single or multiplayer, you can use the weapon tables and descriptions to create new tactics, or just use the proven strategies included in the guide.

If you have trouble finding opponents to play multiplayer, you'll definitely want to check out KALI—a network emulator that lets you play *Descent II* (and other games) reasonably well over the Internet.

For more information about KALI, just <http://www.axxis.com>. Fighting robots is really only basic training for taking on the real thing—live opponents. As to whether humans are smarter than the robots, that's up to you to decide. CP



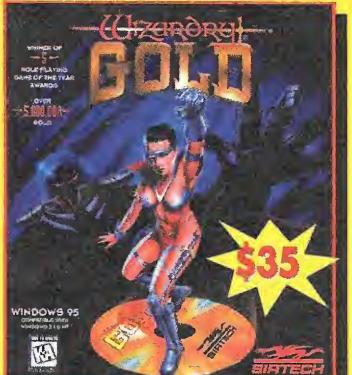


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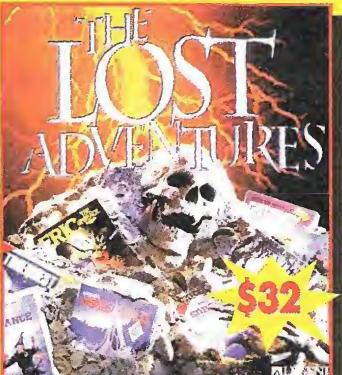


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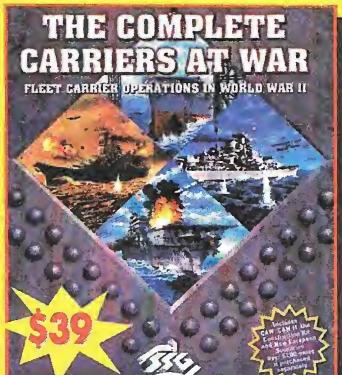
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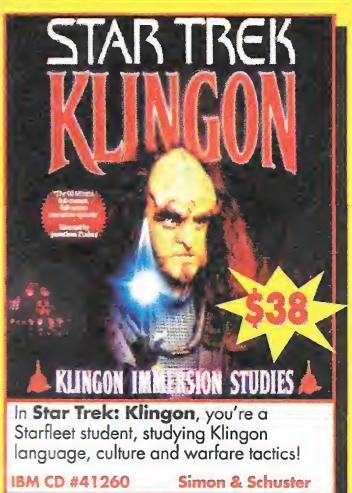
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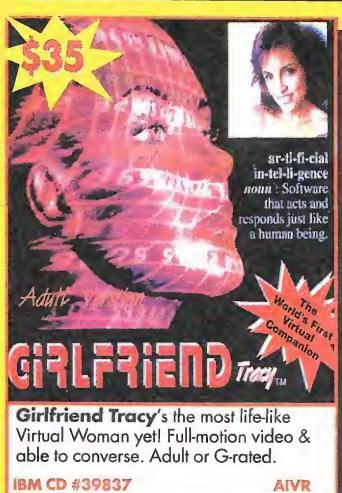
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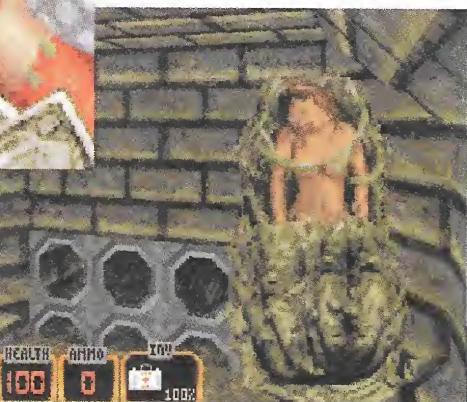
Duke Nukem 3D: CON-file Controversy

I not-so-fondly remember my very first edition of *Over the Line*, in which I passed along a Usenet message from someone who had discovered the message "WORSHIP SATAN" hidden in his copy of LucasArts' 3-D action game *Dark Forces*. The result was a mildly amused readership and a justifiably upset LucasArts, who reacted to the situation by issuing a huge note of apology and replacing offended

gamers' CD-ROMs with Satan-free disks. You'd think 3D Realms would have learned from this ugly incident, but *nooooo*. Apparently, one of the sound effects' variables in the *Duke Nukem 3D* program file USER.CON was named "KILLBITCH."

HEATH ALEXANDER STEPS EASILY INTO THE ROLE OF THE EASILY OFFENDED GUY:

To 3D Realms, I enjoy your products. I think *Terminal Velocity* is an excellent game. You've proven that you are able to make good and marketable products *without offending anyone*. Do you really think that all the bad publicity that you are getting is commensurate with the perceived increase in sales from lonely guys out to get their computer jollies? Trust me, there are many more disks on the market that do that a hell of a lot better than *DN3D*. When I want titillation, I'll buy titillation. Concentrate on the real market: people looking for good PC action games. *DN3D* is a good game, but I won't be buying it simply on the grounds that I find the strippers a useless and exploitative addition to an otherwise great game. Let the vote be cast with dollars!



They might be beautiful, but remember what's underneath that lovely Camay skin....



AND STARRING SETH MESSING AS THE DECLINE-OF-CIVILIZATION GUY:

GEORGE BROUSSARD, PRESIDENT OF 3D REALMS, PLAYS THE PART OF THE DAMAGE CONTROL GUY:

Don't read too much into this. All the *Duke* developers are normal guys like everyone else. Trust me. Nobody hates women. :) In any case, I had this renamed as it was just a code thing.

Thanks for your response; this issue has probably gotten a little bit more airplay than it really deserved. However, I continue to wonder why you guys made certain design decisions. Presumably, you believe incorporating

peep shows, chest-flashing go-go girls, etc., will help sell the product. Kind of sad, somehow, that you're probably right. The steady, inexorable coarsening of entertainment products (computer game, movie, TV show) raises the ante for shock or crudity and leads to lower and lower lowest common denominators. I know I'm sounding pompous and preachy ("For God's sake, it's just a game"), but I do get depressed thinking about what *DN3D* will do for an encore and what some other company will build to surpass *DN3D*.

So that we can avoid controversy, please note that 3D Realms has renamed KILLBITCH in subsequent versions of *DN3D* to the politically correct LADYSCREAM.

Road Warrior: Lowercase Whining

What better way to end the column than with a long-lost poem by e.e. cummings entitled "Stay Away From GameTek," using the Usenet pseudonym "S wallace" (notice the occasional use of typos to keep the reader intrigued):

i'm really unimpressed with your program.
the install program reminds me of the days when my 286 was
top of the line.

1. install does not check for drive space
2. gives strange message when done
3. does not check for ram space

theres a file on the cd memory.txt
the file says look in some other file, now thats stupid.
the program need vesa driver OK
why not have a test for compatibility
ok now that you've installed the real fun starts
don't even think of having multi CD or more than one CD rom on your computer.
don't even think of using any other drive letter then the next available.
and don't even think of getting help from the program
RESET button doubles as help
SO GAMETEK I'm returning this poor excuse for software and
for everyone else STAY AWAY FROM GAMETEK



Poor GameTek has had, shall we say, a less than perfect track record.

Wing Commander IV: Shorter than Ross Perot?

PETER PELKA (PICKED A PECK OF PICKLED PEPPERS—YEAH, LIKE HE'S NEVER HEARD THAT BEFORE) SHARES A COMMON COMPLAINT ABOUT ORIGIN'S BIG-BUDGET INTERACTIVE FLICK:

I just bought *WCIV* yesterday and already finished it at the Ace level. My biggest complaint is why is it so damn short? It took me no more than eight hours to beat the whole game. I didn't count the missions, but *WCIII* took me much more time to beat than this one, and it came on only four CDs! What's going on here? Does it take longer to beat it on harder levels, apart from the need to replay missions several times over? Did the movies take up so much CD space that there was no

more space for missions? I doubt it! *TIE Fighter CD* delivers much more than *Wing Commander IV*,



Gamers will have to wait until the next Wing Commander for better gameplay.

although not in terms of cinematics or video but in terms of sheer combat and number of missions (and the combat engine, which is way better than *WCIV*).

CRAIG EDDRINGTON
(A NAME PRETTY MUCH IMPOSSIBLE TO MOCK)
AGREES:

I was disappointed in the length, too. It seems to me that a lot more effort went into the story than it did into mission creation. I would've liked to see more missions. As a game, I liked *WCIII* better. However, I also think that the movie and story in *WCIV* was far superior to that of *WCIII*.

SCOTT WOLF, AN ON-LINE ELECTRONIC ENTERTAINMENT REPORTER, TRIES TO ENLIGHTEN CRAIG WHILE SHOWING OFF HIS INSIDER KNOWLEDGE:

This is precisely the case.

In the *WCIV* conference on

CompuServe the other night, Chris Roberts admitted that they put all of their efforts into the story and mission details rather than a new sim engine, which would have delayed release for another year or two. Rest assured that *WCIV* will feature an all-new (or, at least, vastly improved) sim engine.

CRAIG'S REPLY SHOWS EXACTLY WHY I PREFER TO BE A SMART-ASS IN PRINT, WHERE NO ONE CAN GET IN THE LAST WORD:

You may have misunderstood me. I wasn't complaining about the same engine being used. I have no problem with that. What I don't like is that the movie seemed to be more important than the game. We went from four to six CDs, and the only real improvement in the game was the video. Now, I liked the story a lot, but I am not convinced that rescues it as a game. Story is important, but gameplay is far more important. It is the variety, amount and quality of gameplay that will keep me coming back for more. If Origin wants to make a movie, fine. Release it in theaters (which they are working on, right?). But if you're going to make a game, make a game.



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Ballblazing A Trail

LucasArts Entertainment might now be one of the biggest PC game companies in the world, but veteran geeks like me remember their awkward beginnings in the mid-1980s, when they called themselves Lucasfilm Games and distrib-

uted their action-oriented products through the once-huge, now-dead game company, Epyx. Most of Lucasfilm's early titles, while being amusing distractions from the nausea-inducing roller coaster known as modern life, weren't the stuff

of legend; *The Eidolon*, *Koronis Rift* and *Rescue on Fractalus* all had decent gameplay and nice-for-the-time graphics, but not much else.

Then came *Ballblazer*

conceived and programmed by a group of folks led by one David Levine. *Ballblazer* was best described as one-on-one soccer: you and a human or computer opponent piloted futuristic hovercraft called Rotofoils in the fight for pos-

session of a hovering ball called a Plasmorb, and you shot it through your opponent's constantly moving "goalbeams" to score points. A simple concept? You betcha, but the flawless programming made the game a joy to play, and the adjustable computer AI meant you could be challenged whether you had the reflexes of Jackie Chan or Rush Limbaugh.

Ballblazer has inspired both an obscure sequel and a rip-off in recent years. First, the obscure sequel: in 1990, the European game developer Rainbow Arts released *Masterblazer* for the Commodore Amiga, Atari ST and IBM PC. This superb game featured the original *Ballblazer* and several neat extras: an eight-player tournament mode, a

"museum" with the fictional history of *Ballblazer* and a two-player slalom-style race through a series of gates. (In an odd tribute to another Lucasfilm classic—and maybe a hint of planned translations that never came to pass—*Masterblazer* had an intro sequence containing fractal graphics as seen in *Rescue on Fractalus*.)

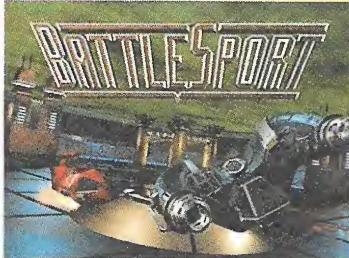
Now, the rip-off:

in late 1995, the 3DO Interactive Multiplayer (a system we can safely declare to be a dead parrot) was graced with Cyclone Studios'

BattleSport—a brilliant "tribute" to *Ballblazer* that had options up the wazoo. The plain-Jane

Rotofoils have been replaced with a variety of vehicles, each with different weapons and capabilities. (Yes, weapons—*BattleSport* lets you shoot and temporarily disable your foe.) While *Ballblazer* had a single arena, *BattleSport* has over 50, equipped with jump ramps,

rotating goals and a huge array of power-ups. It's a great game—one of the best 3DO titles ever, I say without hesitation—and the developers freely admit that *Ballblazer* was their inspiration.



In 1995, Cyclone Studios released *BattleSport* for the now defunct 3DO console game system, which was a brilliant tribute to *Ballblazer*.



When I called LucasArts for last-minute finds of any ancient *Ballblazer* materials they might have lying around, I was handed this golden nugget o' news: they're currently hard at work on an updated version of *Ballblazer* for the Sony PlayStation and (possibly) IBM PC CD-ROM formats. There's no official name for the game yet: *Ballblazer X* was the tentative title for the PlayStation demo shown at last year's

Electronic Entertainment Expo. Will the new *Ballblazer* borrow concepts from *Masterblazer* or *BattleSport*? Will it have the original *Ballblazer* tucked away somewhere as a cool secret? Will I ever learn to play the guitar chords for the classic Kiss song *Cold Gin*? Feel free to ponder these questions as you look at *Ballblazer X*.

A note for those retro-gamers armed with Commodore 64 emulators: you can find the original *Ballblazer* in emulator-friendly .D64 format on several Websites, but because they're all pirated versions, I can't say where. Start at any link-laden C-64 site and go from there. (Ya gotta love Web users; they've never met a copyright they didn't infringe.)



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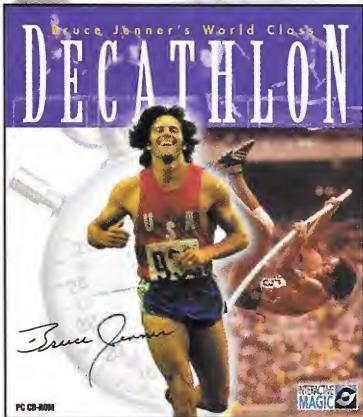
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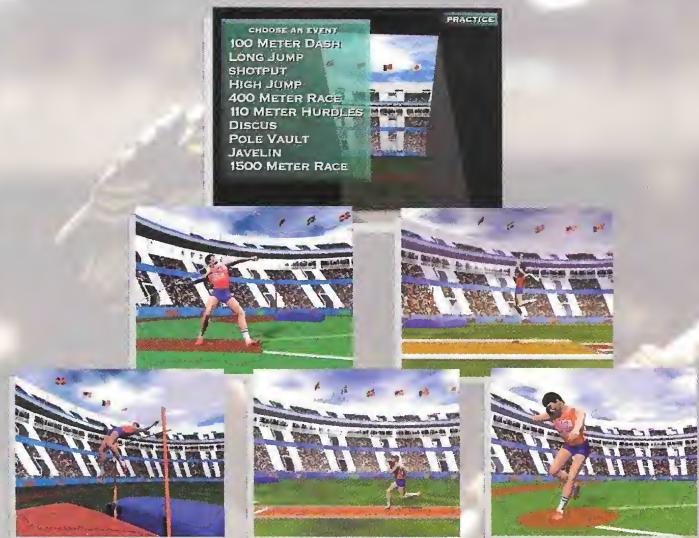
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